

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness. This is heavily influenced by the story Runic Animagus, but is by no means a copy of the story.

Best read in 1/2 view.

The Day the World Went Away

Harry dropped the ministry letter back down onto the Dursley's kitchen table with a small nod. They were coming to break his wand and take him away for something he'd done in self-defence. His eyes made their way over to the shuddering and shivering Dudley, his tiny aunt trying her best to warm the portly boy with her fussing alone. Briefly, their eyes locked and Harry saw something he'd never seen before in those eyes; gratitude. His cousin stopped shaking a little bit,

"T-thank y-you, H-h-harry..." he managed to stutter out, much to the horror of his mother and father. Petunia threw her arms around Dudley's head, wailing something about how Harry was obviously controlling Dudley with a spell of some kind. Vernon took it less peacefully. Turning an interesting shade of red (with a large amount of purple in for good measure), Harry's uncle took a few steps forwards in anger,

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO MY SON YOU LITTLE FREAK?" he demanded, trying to appear even larger than he already was. Harry took one look at his obese uncle's pathetic attempt to appear intimidating and chuckled darkly,

"I saved your son from a fate worse than death and you blame me for his gratitude?" he chuckled again, causing Petunia to glare hatefully at him and Vernon to continue to grow steadily redder. Harry shook his head a little, still with a small grin, "You're welcome Dudley. I-"

Harry was cut off suddenly when his uncle's fist collided with the side of his face, knocking him to the kitchen floor. Vernon lunged at his nephew, roaring something that held no meaning in any conceivable language. Harry, using his Seeker's reflexes, rolled out of the way to allow his bumbling whale of an uncle to crash onto the floor due to his own momentum. Up like a shot, Harry's wand flew to his hand from his pocket and the thin boy pointed it dangerously at his uncle's head,

"If you come at me like that again then I will make you regret it." He vowed darkly, touching his free hand to the bleeding cut his uncle's wedding ring had caused. Petunia sneered in a way that very much reminded Harry of his least favourite potions professor,

"That's an empty threat and you know it you little freak! You'll be kicked out of that school if you do it!" she adopted a superior expression as her husband pulled himself to his feet with a nasty look on his face, "I think he needs to be taught some manners Vernon."

The red-faced man nodded, looking especially gleeful,

"Right you are pet. I think we've been too good to him! He needs to learn to respect his betters!" with his last roar, he lunged at Harry once again. Harry scowled and instinctively flicked his wand, banishing his incredibly heavy uncle into the kitchen units. Of course, a man of Vernon's weight, travelling at speed, caused the cheap kitchen units to splinter inwards as he smashed into them. Petunia screamed and ran to her husband, who was deathly still in the wooden wreckage. Dudley turned to his cousin fearfully,

"P-please... d-don't kill them..." he managed to stutter out against the after-effects of the dementors and his fear of Harry. Harry's eyes widened as he saw the terrified look in his cousin's eyes. A lump formed in his throat as he recognised the look in those eyes. It had been the same look he'd seen in his own eyes, reflected in the eyes of Voldemort as they duelled in the graveyard. His wand-arm fell limply to his side and his mouth fell open, his eyes still wide in horror. Glancing at his aunt, he saw the same look of complete and utter terror and he began to back away, as if recoiling from the look,

"I-I..." he stopped himself almost immediately as his mind came to a conclusion as to why the look bothered him so much.

They're afraid of me. I'm no better than Voldemort.

The conclusion hit Harry like a ton of bricks, making him weak at the knees as he continued to back away from his relatives. But the facts, as he saw them, were undeniable. He'd threatened his uncle Vernon with one of the Unforgivable Curses, albeit indirectly, and then used magic to attack him when he struck out in anger. He turned and ran from the kitchen, hurrying up the stairs and into his room. Slamming the door solidly, Harry closed his eyes and he slumped against the door.

For defending his cousin the ministry was going to punish him by taking away his wand and then kicking him out of the wizarding world, the only place where he truly felt he belonged. In his anger at the ministry's actions he'd taunted his uncle, knowing the man's temper, and struck him a much harsher blow than he'd been given. It had felt good at the time and that was what worried him the most. If it felt good to use a simple banishing charm on his uncle, then imagine what it would feel like if he had accidentally used something else? Something worse?

It caused him to shudder when he realised that the sense of righteousness would have still been there, even if he'd used the Unforgivables. So what if they had beaten and starved him since he'd arrived at their home as a baby? He was a better person than them and he had to show it, not sink to their level and use what advantages he had against them. After a few seconds he pulled himself back up from the door and made his way over to his school trunk, pulling his Invisibility Cloak and the Marauder's Map out without a moment's thought. Moving over to Hedwig's cage, he sighed a little as he helped the snowy owl out of her cage and opened the window. His owl gave him a confused tilt of the head. He smiled a little, glad that his owl was still unafraid and trusting of him. Stroking her feathers, he sighed,

"I need you to fly away from here girl. Find Sirius and stay with him for a while. I'm... well I'm going to have to be doing some running." He explained to his owl. Hedwig tilted her head a little more and gave a soft 'hoot'. Harry smiled and kissed the top of her head, "I'm sorry girl."

He flung his arm outwards towards the window and Hedwig flew off into the night from his outstretched hand. Watching her go, Harry sighed before reaching down and picking up his trusty Firebolt. He threw his Invisibility Cloak over himself, tucked the Map into his pocket and walked out of his room silently. As he looked into the kitchen he was relieved to see a very dazed looking Vernon being fussed over by Petunia and Dudley. He nodded slightly, as if saying goodbye, before he slipped out the front door.

Several 'Pop's echoed across the empty street and Harry spun round, crouched low under his Cloak with his wand at the ready. A group of people wearing royal blue robes had appeared across the street from Number Four. A figure at the front stopped the others and Harry had to blink a few times to realise that the toad-like creature was actually a witch. She coughed a little, the little noise grating at Harry's nerves even across the street,

"We have been charged with capturing the Potter-child. As team leader and Undersecretary to the Minister for Magic, I hereby authorise any force necessary is to be used in apprehending the boy. This is due to the likelihood that he was the one to murder the Diggory boy." She rattled off in an impossibly sugary voice which set his teeth on edge. One of the others, an Auror if he remembered the robes of the wizarding police correctly, took a step forwards,

"Madam Umbridge, the boy has only done some underage magic, is a squad of battle-ready Aurors really needed? The spell was not even offensive." The male Auror argued. The toad-woman, Umbridge, stopped her foot,

"I will not have you questioning my judgement Auror Shacklebolt! Besides, the boy has since preformed a powerful banishing charm in the presence of yet more muggles!" she cried out, seemingly forgetting her own laws about secrecy. Harry crouched there, mulling this new information over in his mind. He knew that the magic he performed with his wand could be traced by the ministry but the Umbridge woman was talking about him as if he was a major suspect in the death of Cedric. Before he could think on it anymore, he heard an owl call from above. He quickly looked up and was relieved to find that it was not Hedwig but appeared to be a school owl. A school owl meant that the Headmaster was trying to contact him. But before the owl could swoop down with its message, a sickly

green flash of light flew from the tip of Umbridge's wand and struck the creature dead instantly. Harry's eyes widened as he watched the limp form of the bird fall to the ground. The male Auror, Shacklebolt, put a hand on Umbridge's arm,

"What the hell do you think you're doing Dolores?" he demanded. Umbridge pulled her arm away from Shacklebolt with a sneer,

"I'm stopping that senile old man doing what he always does; meddling in ministry affairs! Now you will stand down or I will have you fired so fast your wand will spin!" she declared loudly, once again seemingly flouting the Statute of Secrecy she was apparently here to enforce. Shacklebolt took a few steps back but wasn't finished,

"You've performed the worst of the Unforgivable Curses Dolores!" he snapped back, apparently becoming just as agitated by the woman as Harry himself was. Umbridge scoffed, an unpleasant sound that carried all the way to Harry,

"It is only illegal to perform the curse on another human being Shacklebolt." She seemed to dismissive him with a wave of her hand, "Now get to capturing the boy! I don't care how much he has to hurt before he comes in but we will bring him in!"

As the Aurors reluctantly marched into the Dursley's home, Harry quickly ran round the side of one of the neighbouring houses before mounting his broom and flying off at top speed, leaving Number Four Privet Drive behind as he zoomed off into the night as a fugitive.

His wand poked the man in the back of the head and the dark-minded wizard stiffened immediately. Harry pulled the man's wand from its resting place in the hidden back pocket of the man's flowing black robes. He replaced his wand with the one he'd just liberated at the back of the man's head. The man chuckled nervously,

"Ah, you m-must be worried about t-tracking s-spells if you wish to use my w-wand..." he mused, trying to act calm and collected when he was obviously not. Harry smiled a little at the man's tactic and pushed the man further into the dark recesses of the shop,

"And if I am?" he asked, having more luck at hiding his nerves than the shopkeeper. The shopkeeper chuckled lightly, seemingly gaining control of his nerves,

"Then I am the man to see about that..." he drawled silkily. Harry sighed in relief,

"Good, I was worried I was holding the wrong man at wand-point." He quipped, his nerves forcing him to try the vein attempt at humour. The shopkeeper chuckled obligingly,

"And who may I ask is looking for the removal of their tracking charms?" he asked, trying to move onto his charm. Harry shuddered at the man's attempt at charm but pulled himself up to his full height and spun the man round, pushing his wand into his hands with a smirk,

"Lord Potter." He replied with a confidence that he was afraid was all show. The shopkeeper smiled in such a way that suddenly made Harry feel very unclean,

"Ah, Milord Potter... Mr Borgin, at your service." He breathed, his voice obviously meant to flatter but simply causing Harry to shiver at the oily tone. Shaking his head, he smiled a little,

"Mr Borgin, I have recently come into a lot of money... it seems that the ministry's willingness to attempt to try me as an adult is enough for the Goblins to consider me as such." He waved a hand casually at the dusty shop, "And they happened to recommend your establishment for a removal of my wand's tracking charms. Along with a book... a book that once belonged to someone in my family."

Borgin suddenly looked a bit sheepish,

"Well you have to understand Lord Potter... artefacts relating to your survival as a baby are very valuable." He whispered, apparently forgetting that he was the one with the untraceable wand as he gaze into Harry's burning green eyes. The new Lord Potter sighed a little and nodded,

"I was told that you would be loyal enough to me..." he fixed Borgin with another withering look, "For the right amount of gold."

Borgin licked his lips greedily,

"You are indeed beginning to speak my language Lord Potter... you are looking to have the tracking charm removed correct?" he asked, a strange smile in place now that money had been mentioned. Harry's eyes narrowed,

"And the book, Borgin." He relaxed a little, "I will also pay you the total of one thousand galleons if you would so kind as to... assist me with a ritual from the book."

Borgin chuckled dryly and gestured for Harry to follow him deeper into the dark shop,

"You seem to understand my language well Lord Potter... I wonder how you have learnt in such a short period of time?" he asked with a smirk. Harry returned the smirk, despite his inner disgust at the man,

"Goblins will do anything for coin." He rattled off the pure-blood slander as if it tasted foul as it rolled off of his tongue. Borgin chuckled a little, having noticed the distain that Harry held for pure-blood opinion of the Goblins,

"So it has been said..." he murmured before stopping in front of a plain-looking box, long enough to house even a long, 17 inch, wand. Harry ran his fingertips across the polished surface of the box lid with a frown,

"This procedure won't affect my wand's performance will it?" he asked quietly, somehow aware of the magic within the box itself. It felt strangely like it was vibrating quickly, almost like humming, but when he touched it he knew that it was still. Shaking his head, Harry handed his wand to Borgin, handle first. The shopkeeper bowed his head a little at the sign of silent trust and opened the box to reveal a very average looking interior of red felt. Gently, the oily man placed the wand in the felt before closing the lid. He turned to Harry,

"It will work just as it always has Lord Potter... but the box won't open again until I have my fee." He explained carefully. Harry nodded and gestured for the man to continue, "It is a mere 200 galleons, Milord..."

Harry reached into his black robe's inner pocket and withdrew a seemingly very small money pouch. Printed on the side was: 200G. Borgin nodded, accepting that the Gringotts bag would not lie about the amount of money contained within. With one hand he put the pouch in an inner pocket while he opened the box with the other. Harry picked up his wand and examined it carefully before taking note of the tiny symbol now seemingly etched into the wood closest to the grip. He nodded a little when he realised that it was the Potter coat of arms.

There are some advantages with being the head of an Ancient and Noble House...

Snapping back to attention, he carefully concealed his wand within the large, flowing, robes the Goblins had given him by way of a disguise. He nodded,

"A fine job Borgin." He noted before fixing the man with another intense stare, relying on his unnaturally bright green eyes to do the intimidation as they had before. Borgin seemed to shrink back a little but his smile never faltered,

"Ah, I was hoping you would forget about the book..." he noted before disappearing round a stack of seemingly ancient tomes. Harry waited patiently; confident that Borgin would not run as the only exits (the front door and the fireplace) were behind him. Showing his loyalty to potential coin, Borgin reappeared a moment later with a thick tome, bound in what appeared to be black leather. As the shopkeeper set the book down, Harry realised that the cover was bound in dragon hide and not leather, as he'd first thought. Borgin opened the book reverently, "Your grandmother was a witch of great strength... this truly is a powerful book."

"Yes..." Harry agreed easily, his fingertips running over the smooth pages with an almost nostalgic feeling. He looked at Borgin, "500 for the book and a further 1000 for the ritual."

Borgin thought about it for a moment,

"700 for the book." He offered, still in serious thought. Harry frowned,

"600 is the highest I will go." He countered firmly. Borgin looked into Harry's burning eyes for a few seconds before holding out a hand,

"I agree." He said simply. Harry gripped his forearm,

"So mote be it." He said firmly, invoking the Shopkeeper Oath. Borgin smiled at the young man's knowledge,

"So mote be it." He intoned dutifully. Harry let go of Borgin's arm, satisfied. Borgin gestured to a nearby wooden chair, with black chains attached to the arms. Harry frowned a little but did as he was asked, sitting in the chair and letting the chains come to life and bind him to the wooden chair. Borgin took out his wand and Vanished Harry's heavy black robe to the table beside him, leaving the teenager in a pair of dirty blue jeans and a faded red t-shirt, both several sizes too big for him. With a savage flick of his wrist, Harry's t-shirt disappeared to reveal the almost painfully thin body beneath it. Borgin whistled a little as he saw the scars across his chest as well as the scars on each of his forearms, one from a basilisk fang and the other a ceremonial dagger,

"You've seen a lot of action Milord..." he muttered, causing the teenager to frown. Harry didn't especially like it when people commented on the scars that Dudley's gang had given him over the years. Borgin shrugged a little and picked up a paint brush and a small bowl. With expert care, he took a delicate looking vial of black liquid and poured it slowly into the bowl. He noticed Harry watching carefully, "Basilisk venom Milord. But then again... I'm sure you're familiar with it."

Harry chuckled a little, despite his nervousness,

"You could say that." He agreed, thinking back to his second year and the agony of the basilisk venom rushing through his veins. It had been worse than Voldemort's Cruciatus Curse when in the graveyard. Borgin nodded,

"Good. Then you'll understand that this will hurt." He muttered, coating the resistant hairs of the brush with the venom. Once he was certain that none of venom would drop off of the brush, he stood still, the brush poised at the centre of Harry's chest. Harry gritted his teeth and nodded,

"Do it." He ordered forcefully. Borgin nodded once in understanding before touching the brush to Harry's skin to begin. Harry tried to arch

his back to express the pain but the magically binding chains forced his body to stay in the same position, allowing only his head freedom of movement. He thrashed his head from side to side as the agony reached through his entire body from the centre of his chest. It spread like liquid fire through his veins, burning his insides from his very core to his fingertips. Gritting his teeth to keep from screaming out loud in pain, Harry tasted blood and realised that he'd bitten his own lip and that he was now bleeding quite readily from the self-inflicted wound. Strangely, even through the magnificent pain, Harry felt the hairs of the brush moving across his sensitive skin. Lights flashed in front of his eyes whenever he closed them, causing him to open them immediately to avoid blinding himself with pain-induced patches of light in the field of his vision.

Although the pain had started suddenly, it did not go away just as suddenly. Harry felt the hairs of the brush leave his skin and hoped against all that he knew of the ritual that it would mean the end of the pain but it was in vain. The pain continued, despite his continuous mental pleas for it to stop. Mental pleas because he refused to show weakness to the dark shopkeeper. Slowly, the few minutes stretching out into an eternity due to the agony, the pain began to lessen until it was nothing more than a dull throbbing that flared up slightly with each beat of his heart. The chains released him and fell limp again, allowing Harry to slump down in the chair. Borgin approached cautiously,

"Lord Potter?" he enquired softly. Harry raised his head, slowly, as he was incredibly groggy in the absence of the mind-numbing pain from before. He smiled absently at Borgin,

"Seems that it worked... either that or the afterlife is just like the first one..." he slurred, his attempt at humour seeming very out of place considering what had just happened. Borgin merely chuckled,

"It appears to have worked Milord. You have been deemed to have enough Potter blood in your veins to be accepted by the key rune of your family's chain." He observed, pointing at his handiwork on the teen's chest. Harry looked down at his chest and smiled a little more. A plain, unblemished, black circle was now seemingly etched into his skin at exactly the centre of his chest. Harry threw his head back and laughed; the noise strange and harsh coming from his parched throat. Borgin took a cautious step back, afraid the pain from the procedure had loosened Harry's perception of reality a little. Harry's

head slumped forwards again and he brought a finger up, adorned with his House Ring, to idly trace the black line of the circle. He looked up at Borgin, serious once again,

"Another 2000 for the rune chain of Mind and Body." He offered the man, gesturing to a large coin pouch protruding from the pocket of the cloak he'd entered with. Borgin looked at the money pouch for a few seconds, noting that it had 10,000G written on the side of it in bold, black, lettering. He licked his lips slightly,

"How about we go for the rest as well Milord?"

Pairing options;

Harry Potter x Daphne Greengrass

Harry Potter x Susan Bones

Harry Potter x Bellatrix Lestrange

Please review with your vote on the pairing but please know that flirting may happen with the two who are not chosen as well.

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Pairing Poll Results;

Daphne Greengrass – 13

Susan Bones – 12

Bellatrix Lestrange – 3

The winner is Daphne Greengrass! Her prize... to be the love interest of an incredibly wealthy, powerful and alluring Harry Potter! Also to be the second target for all Death Eaters and alike. Goody for her!

Susan and Bellatrix will not be forgotten though!

Discipline

As the fifty members of the Wizengamot were descending into a sort of controlled chaos, the Minister for Magic, one Cornelius Fudge, was smiling confidently as he gazed down from his raised seat at the chained chair, reserved for the accused in full Wizengamot trials. The accused in this particular trial was one Harry James Potter.

And he was not here.

Not only that, but he hadn't been there when the Aurors had invaded his relatives' home in order to carry out the punishment before Dumbledore could contact his pawn about the change in punishment. True enough, it would have been a slight... infraction in the law to apprehend the boy in such a manner but he had to do something.

After all, the boy was spreading lies about You-Know-Who being alive in an attempt to drum up support for Dumbledore.

But he wasn't here.

Minister Fudge's smile extended to become a toothy grin, a look shared by his Undersecretary, to his left, but not by the head of the DMLE to his right. He frowned a little as he regarded Amelia Bones out of the corner of his eye. The blond witch was calm and collected, unlike the members of the Wizingard court all around them. Fudge knew that she would have been a problem in his attempt to roll over the boy during this trial but with the boy's absence, the court would be allowed to continue the trial with the added black mark that he'd not even arrived for his trial. And an innocent person would be able to face a trial with no fear after all.

The fact that he himself had ordered the time of the trial set three hours earlier than previously stated in one of Dumbledore's intercepted messages to the boy had nothing to do with the boy's absence. He'd sent the owls out with the time change. Of course it had been done only two minutes ago, but that was of no concern to the witches and wizards within this dungeon court room. It was with satisfaction then that he raised his gavel, preparing to slam it down and declare that Harry Potter was not going to attend his own disciplinary hearing.

The doors to the court opened with a loud slam, causing the assembled members of the Wizengamot to look towards the heavy oak doors in silence. Fudge paused in mid-swing as his eyes widened.

Harry Potter, dressed in a heavy black cloak, has just entered the dungeon court room with a smile and a wave,

"Good morning everyone. It seems that the notice only got to me a moment ago. Luckily I was just sorting some business out upstairs at the time."

Harry was smiling lightly on the outside but on the inside he was cackling with glee at the crestfallen look on Fudge's face. Not to mention the mental jig he was now doing as he saw the look of barely restrained fury on face of his toad-like assistant, or whatever the hell it was she actually did here beside catching flies. The wave

had also sent the members of the Wizengamot back into several small conversations between its members. He looked up, past the raised seat of the minister and his toadies, at a single balcony that looked down over the proceedings. Even from his position near the door, he could see the black outlines of the seven regal seats of the seven 'Most Noble and Ancient Houses'. With a smirk, he waved at the balcony, receiving waves in return from two of the seats and nods of acknowledgement from three of the others.

With quiet confidence he made his way over to the chained chair in the centre of the room, running his hand over the wood a little as he sat down. It reminded him so clearly of the chained chair in the back room of Borgin and Burkes but the chains were not the black of the dark shop, but gold of the self-important ministry. He frowned as two Aurors stood beside the chair, their wands at the ready. Glancing up at the court, he saw that Fudge seemed to be grinning again, obviously thinking that the Aurors had a right to be where he'd placed them. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"Minister Fudge. Before the trial begins, may I ask why you have stationed armed Aurors beside me? It was my understanding that only dangerous criminals received such treatment." He drawled, thanking Malfoy Sr. for the example in drawling like a superior being and his Head of House Ring for whispering knowledge of his rights in the back of his mind. It was a shame that the ring only taught him the lessons of the Wizengamot. But then he was sure that that was what every new head of the Potter House had needed most upon being named head. During his musings, the toad-like woman, Umbridge, had stood up with a nasty smile on his face,

"Because you are a dangerous criminal. For resisting and avoiding arrest for your crime." She declared loudly, for the whole court to hear, in that sickeningly sweet voice of hers. Harry's eyebrow remained raised,

"Strange. A second letter reached me not long after the first to tell me, in no uncertain terms, that the decision to snap my wand had been revoked. Thus, the warrant for my arrest was revoked. Meaning that my leaving my relative's home was against no laws and not punishable." He focused a little on making his eyes sparkle, and assumed, by Umbridge's now terrible fury, that he had succeeded. Umbridge opened her mouth wide to shout at him (or

eat a fly, he wasn't terribly sure which), but was stopped by Minister Fudge slamming his gavel down repeatedly,

"Order in the courtroom! The young Mister Potter-" he began, he himself looking less than pleased at being outsmarted by a lone teenager, when Harry interrupted him,

"The court will refer to me by my true title." He announced loudly, over the shouts of dissent from the members of the Wizengamot. Minister Fudge's face changed to a shade of red that Uncle Vernon would have been proud of,

"Order! Your title is Mister Potter, as it always has been!" he declared, slamming his gavel down repeatedly to try and keep the shouts of the Wizengamot down. Harry waved his hand dismissively,

"Fine. I offered you a chance to look less of a fool but you have refused. Your lose." He commented idly. Umbridge once again shot to her feet,

"You will show respect for the Minister for Magic!" she spat hatefully down at him. Harry scowled,

"When the incompetent sloth of a man grows a spine then perhaps." He shot back despite trying to bite back his mounting anger. Umbridge reached into her robes quickly, obviously intent on cursing Harry where he sat, but stopped as the woman sat on the other side of Fudge stood up angrily,

"Enough Dolores! You will control yourself while in this courtroom or you will be removed!" she instructed in a firm and slightly aggressive tone that reminded Harry of Professor McGonagall and sent slight shivers down his spine at the thought of there being two McGonagalls. Umbridge scowled at the other witch,

"I am here with the Minister for Magic!" she declared, as if simply being in his presence was enough to grant her every wish. The Minister shrunk away from the two witches at this, causing Harry to chuckle lightly. The blonde witch grew angrier but only seemed to grow more and more like Professor McGonagall,

"He may be high-jacking this trial for himself but I reserve the right to remove people from what is essentially still my courtroom!" she

countered, nodding to an Auror near the door who began to make his way over to Umbridge. Fudge finally decided to use his authority to put a stop to the infighting. Slamming his gavel several times, he stood up,

"Silence in the courtroom! Both of you will return to your seats! And Auror Dawlish will return to his post at once!" he roared in a mighty voice. It might have been impressive, if every person in the room had not seen him trying, and failing, to discretely cast the Sonorus charm on himself. After casting the counter-charm, Fudge glared down at Harry, "We are here to sentence Harry James Potter for his use of underage magic. Now if the court scribe will plea-"

"Minister Fudge I object!" Harry called out with a small smile. He quickly continued to avoid being overruled by the floundering Fudge, "I object on the grounds that such a charge is not applicable to someone of my status and holds no sway over me!"

A member of the Wizengamot stood up. Harry quickly looked the man up and down, noting the arrogant sneer upon the heavily browed face of the man,

"Court will recognise Wizengamot Member, Cecil Nott!" he announced loudly, for the court scribe to hear and acknowledge with a nod, "You claim to have status when you are nothing but a half-blood student! I dispute this claim!"

Fudge looked absurdly pleased with the situation but frowned when Harry chuckled and pulled his long robe away from his right hand. With exaggerated care, Harry held up his right hand to show the sparkling House Ring of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Potter. Cecil Nott fell back into his seat as if shot, calling out "withdrawn!" as if his life depended on it.

In a way it did.

For as the head of a Most Noble and Ancient House, Harry was at least three steps above a member of the Wizengamot in status. Two steps above the Chief Warlock and even a step above the Minister for Magic. And as he turned his hand to show the minister, Harry watched with mild curiosity as Fudge went from redder than uncle Vernon to whiter than Nearly Headless Nick. Harry and Fudge both glanced up at the balcony above the court in time to see one of the

figures nod towards the newly acknowledged Lord Potter. Fudge seemed to instantly deflate as Harry stood up from the chair with a smirk, before taking a few steps closer to the Minister, the Undersecretary and the head of the DMLE. He carefully took his Head of House Ring from his finger and placed it carefully on the podium in front of Fudge,

"As the Head of one of the Most Noble and Ancient Houses, I am above the minor law of underage magic and am legally emancipated." He announced to the Wizengamot at large, noticing a very pale looking Lord Nott as he did so. Umbridge's eyes bugged out and she screeched in fury,

"It has to be a fake! There is no way a filthy half-blood like you is the head of this family!" she ranted before almost diving to seize the ring. Fudge and Madam Bones both tried to stop her but it was too late. Upon first contact with the ring, Umbridge fell to the floor, twitching in silent agony, as if held under the torture curse. Harry frowned a little before picking up his House Ring and putting it back on his finger carefully,

"As you can see, the defences placed upon it as the Head of House Ring for the Most Noble and Ancient House of Potter are active! Showing all of you that I am its only owner!" he declared to the entire Wizengamot, just as Umbridge began to recover from the effects of the Ring's protections. The toad-like woman pointed a stubby little finger at Harry,

"Aurors! Arrest him for assaulting a senior member of the Ministry!" she shrieked loudly. The Aurors went to arrest Harry when Madam Bones raised a hand to stop them,

"Motion to declare that the pain endured by Madam Umbridge was the result of her disputing the Lord Potter's claim on his House Ring, say aye!" she announced firmly. Every single member of the Wizengamot, including a seething Lucius Malfoy, raised their hands and replied "aye". Harry bowed his head to Madam Bones,

"An intelligent and measured response Madam Bones. It is clear to see why the Department of Magical Law Enforcement is the envy of every other ministry department." He intoned with a small smile, thankful for the ring's advice on how to handle a senior member of

the ministry while attending a Wizengamot court session. Madam Bones smiled in return,

"Thank you milord. It is the pleasure of a member of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Bones to accept the praise of the Lord Potter." She intoned in a similarly respectful voice. Harry smiled a little wider,

"I wonder if it would be at all possible to meet with the Head of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Bones, along with the rest of the Seven." He inquired, now purposefully ignoring the hurriedly apologising Minister Fudge and the whispering Wizengamot members. Madam Bones raised an eyebrow,

"What makes you think that I am not Lady Bones?" she asked with a smirk. Harry grinned,

"Because although the members of the Seven are traditionally secret, the seat of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Bones is occupied." He replied with a nod in the direction of the balcony. Madam Bones' smirk widened into a smile,

"Very perceptive Lord Potter. I shall take you to the antechamber of the Seven once the trial has been officially ended." She promised him. Harry nodded before sitting down in the chained chair once again. He waved to pull Fudge out of his feverish apologies,

"Minister. Am I to understand that the charges against my person have been dropped?" he asked with an eyebrow expertly cocked in a show of patient superiority. Fudge went red, this time with embarrassment and not anger,

"Of course Lord Potter!" he banged his gavel down eagerly, "Due to superior status, all charges against Lord Harry James Potter of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Potter are hereby dropped and an investigation will be launched into the presence of dementors near the home of Lord Potter's muggle relatives!"

Harry noticed that Umbridge went whiter than Nott and Fudge had gone at the mention of an investigation and he mentally noted that it was probably the toad-like woman who'd ordered the dark creatures released upon him and his cousin. Just as the Wizengamot members were beginning to rise from their seats to leave, the doors

to the chamber opened wide once again and Albus Dumbledore strode into the room in a strange set of light yellow robes,

"Members of the Wizengamot, I am here to stand in the defence of Mister Potter and bring a witness to testify on his behalf!" he called out in his calming, yet demanding voice. The members of the Wizengamot stopped and stared down at Dumbledore, some in confusion and others in joy at watching the respected light wizard making a fool of himself. Minister Fudge smiled wide. It was obvious to Harry that the smear campaign against the elderly headmaster was far from done. Harry watched in mild amusement as Dumbledore steadfastly ignored his eyes,

"Former Chief Warlock Dumbledore, so nice of you to join us. A conference as Mugwump was it?" Fudge asked with a mocking smile, which was mirrored by his toad-like toady. Dumbledore kept a straight face despite it having been in the morning's paper that he'd gone to the International Confederation of Wizards to be stripped of his title as Supreme Mugwump,

"Yes Cornelius. It seems that they have reason to believe that I am no longer trustworthy. That I am spreading lies." He noted, eyeing Fudge without his trademark sparkle in his eyes. Fudge, for once, did not seem worried about Dumbledore,

"Well I'm afraid you're too late for the trial Dumbledore. It is already over." He announced with a gleeful expression, which was once again mirrored by Umbridge. Dumbledore looked horror-stricken and he moved closer to Fudge,

"Minister, I implore you to reconvene! Mister Potter must have this evidence!" he insisted firmly, but with a mild note of panic to his voice. Harry locked eyes with Madam Bones from his position of lounging in the chained chair. He rolled his eyes and Madam Bones smiled and brought a hand to her mouth discretely to keep from laughing. Minister Fudge's expression darkened only slightly,

"The Lord Potter has been found not guilty Dumbledore. Now if you'll excuse yourself, the Wizengamot courtroom is not a place for a non-member." He hissed, nodding to the two Aurors who had been standing beside Harry. Dumbledore deflated a little and turned to fix Harry with a disappointed look,

"You should have let me organise your defence Harry. Who knows what damage you have done by acting alone..." he trailed off, obviously trying to get Harry to feel guilty about his actions. At Harry continually amused expression his manner hardened, "Come with me Harry. We must get you away from here and somewhere safe."

The headmaster reached to touch Harry's shoulder and could not restrain a small gasp of shock when his wandless compulsion to follow him sparked on contact with Harry's robe and was cancelled out. Harry stood up from the chair and moved away from Dumbledore,

"I'm afraid I have a meeting with some very important people Professor Dumbledore." He sent the old man a withering glare as Madam Bones descended from her raised seat, "You have no power over me until the first day of school so I will be staying where I choose. Good day Headmaster Dumbledore."

With that, Harry spun on his heel to follow Madam Bones out a different door and left the most powerful light wizard watching him walk away in shock.

Amelia, as Madam Bones had insisted that he call her, opened a set of heavy silver doors for him, Harry looked around the domed room with nothing short of wonder. Every inch of the round room's walls were covered in light yellow wallpaper which seemed to have seven large family trees imprinted on them in black and silver. He stared at the closest one in awe.

The Most Noble and Ancient House of Potter.

The family tree had once been large, with the bottom of the wall obviously being the starting point with such a large number of names on it that could not possibly be said to belong to the House of Potter now as he was the last member. Indeed, he could see his name at the very end of the family tree, so far up the wall that it approached the centre of the decorated dome. A voice broke him out of his musing,

"Very imposing the first time isn't it?" asked a family voice. Harry spun round on the spot, snapping his head back down to see Neville Longbottom standing in front of him dressed in silver robes and smiling nervously. Harry smiled wide at seeing his fellow Gryffindor

and wrapped the larger boy in a manly hug before stepping back to look at his friend's silver robes,

"What's with the get-up Nev? Do we really have to wear those?" he asked with a thin smirk. Neville raised an eyebrow, some of his nervousness melting away,

"You don't seem too surprised that I am a member of the Seven." He noted with a similar smirk. Harry shrugged a little,

"My House Ring is simply full of useful political information." He replied with a dismissive wave at his own skills. Neville smiled a little and gestured at Seven empty chairs that Harry hadn't noticed upon first entering, having dismissed the chairs as too plain to be anything important in the ornate room,

"Then I guess I just have to tell you which seat is yours." He joked, nudging Harry playfully with his elbow. Harry scowled playfully and moved to place his hand on top of a chair with the Potter crest engraved into its back. Upon touching the wood, Harry felt suddenly comfortably warm all over, as if the chair was more an extension of himself. He took his hand away quickly and gave a chuckling Neville a mild glare,

"You could have warned me about that." He growled at his friend. Neville scoffed,

"You're lucky. Greengrass convinced me I had to sit in it to have it accept me. I've never shot so high out of a chair before in my life..." he muttered, throwing a dark look at another silver figure that was entering the room. Harry stood completely still and the hairs on the back of his neck stood on end as he soaked in the sight of Daphne Greengrass' silky blonde hair, flawlessly smooth, pale skin and her sharp, blue, eyes. With just enough presence of mind, Harry bowed his head slightly as a sign of respect,

"Lady Greengrass." He acknowledged, a small lump forming in his throat and an uncomfortable feeling settling in his stomach. The Slytherin girl smiled a little and inclined her head as well,

"Lord Potter... we were wondering when you'd finally join our ranks." She noted, her voice sending shivers down Harry's spine that could

not be further from the shivers that Umbridge's voice had caused. He blinked a few times as he recognised what had been said,

"You've been expecting me?" he asked with slightly narrowed eyes. Another vaguely familiar voice came from behind him,

"Oh don't be so tense about the situation Harry. The family trees tell us who should be here before they are." Came the explanation from one Susan Bones. Harry blinked a few times to keep from staring at the red head. The silver robes did nothing to hide the fact that Susan Bones had done a lot of growing up in certain areas that were very important to teenage boys. Harry forced himself to look up into her amused green eyes. He felt his face flush a little,

"Well that... that is still pretty unnerving." He countered nervously. Susan and Daphne giggled quietly together across the room and Neville shook his head despairingly,

"We'll never get anything done now that they think they can talk about you all day Harry." He complained loudly, causing both girls to blush, although Daphne admittedly blushed less than Susan. Daphne coughed a little to clear her throat,

"Anyway... Harry we are the last of the Seven." She said her whole demeanour completely serious now. Harry's eyes widened,

"The four of us are the most politically powerful force in wizarding Britain?" he asked incredulously. Susan nodded, serious as well,

"Yes Harry. Which is why we stay secret. The ministry must think there are Seven or they will begin to get restless. Only you are to be publically acknowledged as part of the Seven." She told him as she sat down in one of the wooden chairs. Harry sat down in the Potter chair while Daphne and Neville sat down in their own seats. Harry frowned a little,

"Why you guys? No offence of course." When they waved off his concerns he continued, "But you all have elder family members. You can't be the head of a house without being the eldest or the eldest male at least."

Neville shook his head,

"The seats of the Seven are decided based on magical souls. If the room finds you worthy then you are made the secret Head of House and a member of the Seven." He paused and thought about it for a moment, "Provided that you are of the correct House of course."

Harry looked out at the empty chairs,

"Who are the other families?" he asked, his eyes resting on two crests he thought were vaguely familiar. Daphne answer, sending more shivers up his spine,

"Potter, Black, Bones, Longbottom, Greengrass, Crouch and Peverall." She whispered, her voice carrying across the room anyway. Susan shared a glance with Daphne before speaking,

"The reason we've been waiting so much for you Harry... is that you are the Head of more than one of these Houses." She told him in her own whisper. Harry buried his head in his hands,

"Why the hell can't anything about me be normal?" he mumbled under his breath. Neville patted his friend on the back,

"You're also the head of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Black, through your magical connection to Sirius Black as your Godfather." He explained, causing Harry to groaned loudly. Daphne smirked,

"You're also the head of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Peverall, Harry." She supplied, causing Harry to begin banging his head against his fists,

"Stupid, stupid, stupid Harry! Should have stayed in the cupboard under the stairs... spiders aren't this complicated..."

I told you that it was AU.

Pairing is Harry/Daphne but he will flirt with others before their relationship is formal.

Yes, it is another one of those fics where Harry is suddenly the heir of various families. But it's not too focused on them to be honest.

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

I've gotten some calls to make a mini-harem for Harry (either with Susan and Daphne or Bellatrix and Daphne) and I'm just wondering if there are others wishing for the same thing. If so then when you review, please put a preference.

However, Daphne WILL be paired with Harry no matter how much you beg. I happily await your pitchforks for daring to say such a thing.

Remember the name

Harry groaned a little as he stretched out as much as he could, arching his back to raise his legs so that they went over the end of the overly old-fashioned couch. A few of his joints popped loudly and he let out a contented sigh as he sank back down under his cloak, drifting between being awake and asleep.

Damn the Longbottom couches were comfy!

As if by simply thinking about the family the couch belonged to, Neville opened the door, fully dressed in jeans and a t-shirt, with a cowbell. Through half-lidded eyes, Harry looked at the cowbell, very wary of the metal hammer his friend was carrying with him.

He wouldn't...

DING!

Harry gritted his teeth and brought his hands to his ears to block out the powerful sound. Of course, the fact that Neville had positioned the bottom of the cowbell over his right ear might have had something to do with how loud it seemed. He opened his eyes,

already narrowed as they were, and looked at the smirking Longbottom,

"Did you really have to do that?" he asked in little more than a hiss. Neville rolled his eyes and dropped the cowbell onto Harry's lap, causing his friend to wince and reach to his aching regions,

"Well I knocked a couple of times. And shouted. Just like yesterday." He replied with another smirk before pointing at the cloak, "Now get out from under that old thing and get dressed! Susan and Daphne are coming round today for lunch."

Harry sat up straighter at the mention of the other members of their 'special group', as he called them, and cast a glance around for the time. He scowled at his own stupidity for realising that there wasn't a clock in the room because most wizards knew simple time-keeping spells. As he rubbed his eyes he nodded to Neville,

"Alright... what time is it now?" he asked with a yawn. Neville put a finger on his chin to imitate thinking before smirking,

"Around 5." He answered before dodging to the side as Harry threw the cowbell at him. Harry tried to scowl but couldn't help but smile a little,

"And why did you feel the need to wake me at 5?" he asked with a polite tone that somehow wreaked of mischief. Neville's face turned serious instantly,

"Because you wake up screaming every morning at around 6." He told his friend with a light look of concern, a look that assured you that prying was not the intention of the concern. Harry smiled sadly,

"Thanks for looking out for me then Nev." He replied with a faraway look in his eyes before shaking his head of such thoughts, "So what are we going to be doing until they get here for lunch?"

Neville smirked as he wandered around the Longbottom Drawing room. The room itself was ornately decorated with chesterfield couches and armchairs that seemed to radiate a simple charm along with class and sophistication. A white marble fire place demanded attention in the centre of the main wall with its imposing nature and simple elegance. Although no fire was burning at the moment, the

room remained warm and cosy. Coming from all of the walls but the main one, the dusty smell of books wafted towards the centre due to the massive bookcases and writing desks. Haphazardly thrown clothes were settled a top on of the main writing desks, with a snowy owl sleeping peacefully a top the wood. With a sigh, the young Longbottom pulled a pair of jeans and a t-shirt from the pile of clothes before throwing them on top of the still sitting Potter,

"We're going swimming for most of it. The Second Task really showed the whole school that the mighty Boy-Who-Lived wasn't as versatile as he could be." He remarked, ignoring Harry's dark look at the mention of the Tri-Wizard Tournament, "And I'm finally going to get to the bottom of why you feel the need to spend every night sleeping on one of my couches. We've got guest rooms and your refusal to use them is sending Diffy into madness. And that little elf wasn't exactly all there to begin with..."

Harry chuckled a little as he thought about Dobby when Neville spoke about his house-elf who 'wasn't all there'. Now THERE was a true crazy elf. He shrugged a little,

"I guess I could give it a chance but your couches are all just so comfy!" he remarked, only half-joking. Neville rolled his eyes,

"I know Harry, they are my couches after all." He replied with a small smile. Harry grinned and stood up, throwing his cloak to one side so that he was dressed only in boxers. Neville raised an eyebrow which made Harry chuckle,

"Yes I know, it's quite a change." He agreed before moving to pull on the jeans. Neville smirked,

"Understatement of the century Harry." He muttered before frowning, "I don't suppose you have any swimming wear?"

Harry shook his head before pulling on the t-shirt, now fully clothed,

"Nah, never had much call for them. The Dursleys wouldn't have taken me swimming unless they thought they could get away with drowning me." He remarked with a shrug. Neville grimaced,

"They sound like real creeps..."

"Now THAT is the understatement of the century Neville."

After eating breakfast with Dame Augusta Longbottom (who was so larger-than-life and overbearing that Harry suddenly felt shy in her presence) the two boys went wandering in the grounds of Longbottom manor. As expected from the green-fingered Grif', the grounds were the single most beautiful collection of plant life that Harry had ever seen. From the magical to the mundane, the Longbottom grounds had them all. More than once Neville had to steer Harry away from certain plants to keep him from being eaten alive, poisoned or a combination of the two.

They walked down a loose gravel path with their hands in their pockets, in total silence, as the crickets chirped, the butterflies flew and the morning birds sang their songs. And surprisingly enough, the silence wasn't awkward in the least. Every time Harry had been silent with Ron or Hermione... well there would have to be something wrong for a start because getting those two in the same room AND silent was nothing short of a miracle. But when those few moments had come, they had been so incredibly awkward, to Harry at least, and all of them immediately rushed to start up a conversation. Such an event usually ended with Ron saying something insulting to Hermione and then both he and Ron would receive an incredibly long rant even though he'd done nothing wrong. He'd tried to tell that to Hermione once and all he'd gotten was an hour-long rant that was specifically targeted at him and how rude he was and how he'd be lost without her... or some such crap, Harry learnt to tune out the bossy girl when he'd realised that rants would be a regular occurrence.

But the silence wasn't awkward with Neville!

It was as if the boy was doing exactly the same as he was at the moment; breathing deeply and letting the sounds of nature roll over him. He looked over at Neville to see the other teen smiling slightly, seemingly at nothing. That caused him to smirk before nudging his friend,

"Hey Nev... no offense but I can see why you were always so shy back in the lower years. Your grandmother made me feel shy too!" he joked as they took a turning in the path towards the pool area. Neville smirked back,

"Well she used to be worse. But ever since I helped you out in the second task, she's been focusing on me and my skills and not my Dad's skills..." He replied, trailing off a little bit at the end with a sad frown. Harry put a reassuring hand on his friend's shoulder,

"Neville. You are not your father. The same as I am not my father. We may resemble them. We may have some of their prized and loathed traits but we are our individuals." He smiled a little at the other teen. Neville gave a small grin back,

"So your hair is just one of those bad traits?" he teased. Harry let out a frustrated sigh,

"Yes. It just won't stay in any sort of order! It's just chaos!" he exclaimed with Lockhart level theatrics. Neville rolled his eyes before becoming serious,

"On another subject... how do you think the Headmaster is taking to you blowing him off at the trial like that?" he asked, a hint of his old nervousness returning as he thought about the old man in a rage. Harry shrugged,

"He'll bitch and moan a little but in the end he'll say something like, 'I'm very disappointed in you Harry...' while looking over those damnable spectacles, with those damn twinkling eyes and the tones of a grandfather." He replied, a little bitter with how the Headmaster tried to guilt him into toeing the line with his best Father Christmas impression. Neville chuckled a little,

"That's all? Your cloak stopped his compulsion charm, letting every member of the Wizengamot know about it as well, and you totally blew him off in front of the most important people in Wizarding Britain... and he's just going to look disappointed?" he asked, a little disbelieving. Harry thought about it for a minute before nodding again,

"All evidence points to that idea. Not like there is anything he can actually do to make sure that I am a good little boy now is there?" he asked with a smirk. Neville frowned,

"I don't know... he might not have to." He replied, deep in thought. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"You think he'd recruit other people to spy on me to ensure that I do as I'm told?" he asked, a disbelieving note in his tone now. Neville nodded lightly,

"It is within his power. My grandmother told me about a secret organisation he formed to combat Voldemort during the first war. He got my parents and your parents involved in it because they were the best that the Auror department had to offer at the time. Who's to say that he hasn't begun to recruit from this crop of Aurors?" he mused aloud. Harry frowned,

"And what, pray tell, is the name of this Organisation?"

"The Order of the Phoenix."

As Harry waved to Susan and Daphne, who were being led towards the pool by a grinning Neville, he realised that both girls would be dressed in swimsuits. Of course this was the most logical conclusion, as they were coming over to use Neville's swimming pool as well as talk about the Seven. Unfortunately for the young Lord Potter, that meant having to deal with the one area that he was pretty sure there were no shortcuts for.

Teenage girls with few clothes on.

Even just thinking about the soft and supple skin on display made the blood rush to his cheeks and give him the sudden urge to dive into some cold water. Fortunately for him, there was a rather large rectangle of a pool a few yards from the sun lounger he was sitting on. Noting that the girls were quickly approaching, Harry quickly stood up and pulled off his t-shirt. Not noticing the others stopping in mid-step, he flicked his wand and his jeans transfigured into a pair of black swimming trunks. Without another thought he jumped into the cold and forgiving water.

Unfortunately, Harry had forgotten, with all the hormones in his mind, that he was an appalling swimmer. And the fact that he'd just jumped into the deep end of the pool was somewhat of a problem considering his lack of swimming prowess. Breaking the surface with a large gulp for air, Harry pushed himself forwards, towards the shallow end, and kicked his feet a few times to keep his head above water. Finally his feet could touch the ground and still keep his head

above the water so he calmed down a little and moved to the edge of the pool, now calmer in body due to the cold water.

He smiled up at the others for a second before noting the strange looks he was getting from them. Neville seemed to look somewhat appalled by something and Harry was silently hoping that he wasn't going to launch into a rant about how dangerous it was to jump into the deep end when he only had the vaguest of ideas on how to swim, just like a certain bushy haired girl would have done.

Susan was a strange case to be sure. Her mouth was open in what appeared to be shock but it was twitching a little, as if she were trying to say something and then lost the words before they formed every time. A look in her eye was easily identified as pity but it was mixed with another emotion which caused her eyes to take on a rather dulled, glazed, appearance. To top it off, her cheeks were tinged with pink as if she were too hot or embarrassed. She was dressed in a loose fitting blue blouse with a pair of white shorts (which showed off her great legs perfectly in Harry's mind), so he couldn't imagine her being hot enough to be flushed with heat. It might have been summer and sunny but it was England after all. Off the top of his head he couldn't think of any reason why she would be embarrassed either, if anything he should be the embarrassed one for exposing his upper body to the girls as soon as they got a bit close.

Daphne, the Slytherin Ice Queen, appeared to be having trouble keeping herself cool as well, if her slightly flushed cheeks were any indication. Once again, it was odd that she be this flushed when she was dressed in a black tank top and a black skirt, which was quite a way above her news. He'd never taken her to be a girl into the whole 'gothic' scene but then again he'd only really spoken to her at the first meeting of the Seven he'd attended. Back to the matter at hand... her eyes also held the familiar spark of pity but they too were mixed with another emotion. Fortunately he knew this one well from the times he'd withheld information from Hermione; it was the smouldering look of curiosity.

As he pondered what exactly Daphne was curious about, he realised that quite a few minutes had passed in his efforts to single out every emotion that his three friends had been showing. Worried that he might have missed something by zoning out, he quickly looked around and found that whatever changes had taken place

while he'd zoned out were minimal. It was almost as if time had slowed as his mind worked hard to analyse every aspect of the scene before him. As he blinked it went back to normal speed, Susan's mouth now fully opening and closing in her struggle for words and Daphne's curiosity now almost sparkling in her eyes. He sheepishly scratched the back of his head,

"Is there something on my face or something?" he asked, half-joking and half-serious. Neville was the first to recover,

"Mate... when did you get so buff?" he asked, thankfully without the tinge of jealousy he had come to expect from male friends. Harry looked down at himself. It was true that it had changed quite a lot since his flight from Privet Drive. Without being starved, and probably due in some part to his runes, his body had filled out. But instead of filling out and out like Dudley had, Harry had seemingly only put on muscle. His arms were now twice as wide as the skinny twigs had once been and his stomach had faint lines separating his displayed stomach muscles. Of course the muscles were tightly coiled around his body, giving his body the look of something dynamic, ready to spring into action at a moment's notice, like an acrobat or the like. He looked back up at Neville and shrugged,

"Last couple of weeks I suppose... been eating better since I left my relatives." He replied, now slightly nervous at the stares the girls continued to give him, although Susan had thankfully resumed control of her mouth and closed it. Daphne raised an eyebrow,

"And what about those black lines on your skin?" she asked quietly, something which surprised Harry. He'd learnt that curiosity made women loud from Hermione but it was apparently not universal, something that he was supremely thankful for. He followed her gaze to the perfect black rune circle in the centre of his chest, standing in stark contrast to his pale white skin. Realising that an explanation was probably due, he pulled himself out of the water to stand a little way away from his friends, so that everyone could see so that he'd only need to explain himself once and could avoid repeating himself three times. He pointed to the perfect rune circle in the centre of his chest,

"This is a Key Rune. It is physically anchored to me by the mark on in my skin. Yes, 'in my skin' because the substance used burned through a few layers of skin to get a proper purchase on me. Of

course the substance also bound it to my magical core because of the symbolism relating to the centre of the human chest." He rattled on, almost as if bored. Daphne raised a hand, causing him to chuckle a little, "Yes Miss Greengrass? You have a question?"

Daphne apparently ignored his sarcastic tone as her eyes never lost the shine of curiosity,

"Why would you mark yourself with a Key Rune? Runes only work on inorganic materials. And what 'substance' did you mark yourself with to establish such connections?" she asked, once again in the quiet and contemplative tone that was so foreign to him. Harry smiled a little,

"I got a Key Rune marked in me to link the other runes into me of course. As for runes working in me... well that's a family secret. The preparation of the substance is also a family secret but the substance itself isn't really. It's mostly a mix of dragon's blood and basilisk venom. But mostly the venom to be honest." He replied, noting the shocked expressions that continued to adorn both Susan and Neville's faces. Daphne frowned,

"So... the other marks are runes too? That's why they all touch the Key Rune in the centre right? What do they do?" she asked, listing off the main questions of the moment. Harry chuckled and pointed out the bands which ran across his forearms and lower legs,

"These are Warrior Band Runes. They are connected by the thin black lines you see running up the insides of my limbs. Basically the take waste energy from food and use it to physically improve the body until it is in peak physical condition for magical combat." He looked down at himself again with a frown this time, "Not entirely sure when they'll stop adding mass though..."

Susan moved out of her shocked stupor long enough to point to a small rune just above his hip on the right side of his body,

"What does that one do?" she asked while gesturing at the rune. Oddly enough, the series of tiny runes was grouped in such a way as to appear to be small skull. He shrugged,

"That one is to negate any poisons that enter my body. Keeps me from dying a Snape-related death but also means that I can never

get drunk." He smirked at Neville who grinned at the small joke. Daphne frowned, a silent display of disapproval which stop his smirk dead,

"What about the eye?" she asked, gesturing with a nod of her head to the black, Egyptian style, eye just below his left ear. He scratched it idly with a finger,

"That is the Eye of Clarity. It gives greater focus to the mind." He explained carefully, making a mental note that it was probably this rune which had made the world seem to slow down when he thought he needed time to think. Of course it didn't actually slow time, that was impossible for a rune to do, but it made his brain move at such a speed, for a short time, that it might as well have done. Neville raised an eyebrow,

"What about that one around the bottom of your neck?" he asked, obviously pointing at said band of runes. The ring around the base of his neck was made entirely of singular rune markings joined together to form the black ring. He ran a finger along a part of his absently,

"The Ring of Safety and Revenge." He explained before tapping his forehead, "Acts as a defence for the mind. And as a counter attack should the defence fail."

Deciding to cut off the remaining questions before they were asked, he began to list his remaining runes before pointing to them.

"The Rune of Constant Life. Gives a great deal of energy." – A circle within a slightly larger circle, the rune was just above his left nipple, something which caused Susan to go a little redder.

"The Continual Suffering Rune. Lessens the effects of pain and injuries on the body but inflicts it twice as much on the mind. Apparently a double edged sword." – This rune was two lines, simply crossed in the middle, with the middle being linked back to the Key Rune by another, thinner, line. The dark(ish) rune was in the crook of his right shoulder. The description of this rune caused Neville to frown hard and both of the girls to shudder a little.

"Strengthening Rune. Strengthens the bones, muscles and tissues of the body so that it can take much more of a beating." – This rune

was a long one, being a thick line that ran down the length of his spine, following its contours perfectly. Thin lines connected both the top and the bottom of the thick line to the corresponding parts of the Key Rune. When he'd turned his back to them to show them, he'd felt a soft and feminine finger trace it all the way down his spine, sending pleasant shivers through his body. But when he'd turned round, both girls had their hands by their sides and were fighting the pink tinges in their cheeks while Neville was grinning; obviously knowing which girl had done it. Harry decided to ignore them.

"And this... well this is the most dangerous of all of the runes. Simply known as 'The Multiplier', this rune has three stages. Not only that but each stage needs to be manually activated. The first doubles my magical core and its reserves. The second triples the core and reserves. The last one... well that increases both by ten. Problem is that the magical core becomes more unstable the more it is increased, meaning that each of them has a high possibility of having the core blow me to kingdom come." – This chilling rune was a set of three linked triangles, linked in such a way that they arranged in a three sided pyramid shape. Neville had gone white at the explanation, Susan had gasped and Daphne had gone deathly still.

Finally finished with his list, Harry stood there sheepishly, scratching the back of his head once again,

"So there you have it... any questions?" he asked, trying to inject some humour to save the situation from the awkwardness. All three of them shook their heads negatively. He smiled nervously, "Anything to add then?"

Susan nodded meekly. He nodded for her to continue. She blushed even more,

"You look really hot like this Harry..."

"... Thank you Susan. You're not looking bad yourself."

I am aware that it kind of degraded into a list towards the end but I hope you can forgive me, it would have been awful to write it all out as prose.

Next chapter;

Return to Hogwarts! A Hero and his companions beset by enemies!

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Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

I promised you the obligatory "Return to Hogwarts" chapter where Harry "shows his old friends how he doesn't need them". Seriously... it's so clichéd that I feel dirty just doing it... in a somewhat good way I guess. Back to the matter at hand.

As decreed by you, reviewers, Harry will get the buxom red-headed 'puff and the dangerously sexy snake. I have been informed by a reviewer that this will be the second story, on this site, to deal with a Harry/Daphne/Susan relationship. All I have to say to that is... I accept the challenge to be better than the first one!

Welcome Home (Sanitarium)

Harry closed his eyes and began to breathe deeply, in and out, through his nose. Concentrating on the pattern of his own breathing, he began to hear the pounding of his own heart in his ears lessen considerably, enough so that he could hear the amused chuckles of the other teen standing beside him. He cracked an eye open to send a mild glare at the young Lord Longbottom,

"What's so funny Neville?" he asked, still trying to keep account of his breathing's pattern. Neville chuckled again and moved over to the couch in the Longbottom drawing room, checking that his chest atop the furniture was correctly locked and tied down with its leather straps,

"It's funny really..." he mused, much to Harry's annoyance, "You can face a dragon, in the AIR no less, and yet you're shaking like a leaf at the prospect of running into someone who might know you at a train station. Which is, quite frankly, rather stupid."

Harry sighed a little,

"Thanks for trying to comfort me bu-"he began but apparently Neville had not finished,

"I mean come on Harry. You're the Boy-Who-Lived, the one who said he saw Voldemort come back to life, Champion of the first Tri-Wizard tournament in hundreds of years, emancipated Lord Potter and the only member of the Seven to ever be publicly known..." he grinned at the nasty scowl Harry was sending him, "EVERYONE will 'know' you Harry. You're the wizarding world's most eligible bachelor, at age 15 no less, and one of its richest to boot. Every girl and her mom will be drooling over you and every father and son will be trying to vilify you to compensate for the fact that they can't keep their women from fanaticising about you. Face it man, you're dreams of being unknown are gunna collapse faster than Ron's sentence structure around a Veela."

Harry tried to keep scowling but the last point broke through and made him grin a little,

"Very eloquently put Neville. Ever considered taking up old Lucy's position as a politician after we off him and the other Death Lickers?" he asked, smirking when his friend made a face. Neville scowled,

"I'd rather spend the rest of my life listening to Moaning Myrtle fawn about you in her bathroom." He shot back, noticing Harry's cringe with a smirk of his own. Harry frowned,

"She doesn't really do that... does she?" he asked, now VERY sure that he never wanted to visit that bathroom ever again. With his recent changes, he would be very thankful that she couldn't rape him because she wasn't tangible. Neville nodded with a sad smile,

"Unfortunately so. There are rumours that she's even the founder of your fan-club but I think she's more of the Treasurer or something..." he stopped talking when Harry held a hand up in front of his face. When the hand descended he had to stop himself from laughing out loud at the horror etched into Harry's face,

"I have a freaking fan-club?" he half-demanded, half-inquired. Neville chuckled, his only substitute for rolling around on the floor and holding his sides,

"I'm surprised you never noticed Ginny on her recruitment drives." At Harry's blank expression he continued, "Do you ever remember walking into the Common Room and having it go deadly quiet all of a sudden when people notice it's you? Okay, of those many, many, times... think about who was silent. Did you ever notice a large number of girls crowded around some of the study tables?"

Harry looked horrified again,

"Are you telling me that all those times I thought it was a study group they were obsessing over me? But wait a minute... Hermione was in those groups!" he reeled back in shock and closed his eyes tightly, "My god... this is not happening!"

Neville shrugged,

"Well they are the biggest group." He commented idly, watching Harry's head snap back up with amusement,

"Are you trying to tell me that there are other groups?" he asked; his eyes wide and his voice now deathly quiet and measured. Neville nodded, his expression mockingly grave,

"One for each house I believe." He replied with a mockingly sad smile when inside he was laughing his ass off. Harry's eyes widened to comical degrees and Neville couldn't help but laugh,

"Even Slytherin?" he asked incredulously. Neville grinned savagely,

"Oh that's the best one... it's led by Parkinson." He supplied, noting with satisfaction as Harry's face scrunched up as he tried to remove the thoughts of Pansy Parkinson fanaticising about him. Harry, despite his new mental scarring, dared to ask,

"Why?"

"Well because she wants to get both you and Draco in at the same time of course." Neville answered, grinning until he noticed that his

friend had turned a sickly shade of green, "Hey now... if you going to be-"

"BLEH!"

"OH COME ON! THESE ARE MY BEST JEANS!"

"Ugh... you... deserve that..."

When Harry, Neville and Dame Longbottom arrived in the farthest corner of platform nine and three quarters, Neville was in the middle of glaring at a chuckling Harry. Augusta Longbottom frowned seriously, despite looking anything but with her bird-topped hat, and smacked both boys lightly round the back of the head with a rolled up copy of the Daily Prophet,

"Behave; the both of you. You're in public now and are representing the Most Ancient and Noble Houses of Potter and Longbottom, so show some decorum!" she demanded harshly, despite the glint of humour in her beadily little eyes. Neville pouted as he rubbed the back of his head gingerly,

"But he was sick on my jeans... and these one's don't fit as well." He protested childishly. Harry laughed mentally at his friend's act before deciding to play along. He pouted right back,

"He started it! He said that Pansy Parkinson had fantasies about me and Malfoy sleeping with her and each other!" he whined, noting with satisfaction that both Augusta and Neville cringed a little at the conjured image. Augusta frowned in distaste,

"Point to Harry... that was too far Neville." She declared, causing her grandson to nod slightly,

"I guess so..." he muttered, still trying valiantly to fight the image of two rather unattractive snakes with his best friend. Harry nodded sagely, one hand holding his trunk's handle and the other holding his cloak from its position slung over his shoulder,

"Glad to see that you know I was right." He commented with a faked air of superiority which was cut off when the copy of the Daily Prophet hit him again, "Ow! What was that one for?"

"For putting young mister Malfoy to shame with your fake arrogance." Augusta declared with a small smile. Harry went red and Neville fell about laughing before stopping due to a similar hit, "And stop laughing at his misfortune Neville, it's not nice."

Both boys smirked before nodding back at the Longbottom matriarch with matching smiles. Augusta smiled warmly and wrapped her grandson in a tight hug before pulling a shocked Harry in as well. Harry's eyes went wide at the impromptu group hug. It was so spontaneous that it caught him completely flat footed. It wasn't the uncomfortable pressure of Hermione's vice-hugs and it wasn't the unbearable heat of Mrs Weasley's hugs. It was somewhere between the two, just tight enough and just warm enough to be comfortable. When it was over he gave the old Longbottom woman a warm smile,

"Goodbye Mrs Longbottom. It has been the best summer I've ever had." He told her without a trace of hesitation. Augusta's eyes shone a little with joy,

"Then we'll have to do it next year as well." She declared, much to the amusement of both boys. Harry grinned,

"I'd like that. I'd like that a lot Mrs Longbottom." He replied before looking up at the scarlet train as it sent out a loud whistle. Both Harry and Neville waved to the Longbottom matriarch before rushing through the last compartment of the train. When they were through the door they breathed a sigh of relief at escaping the crushing rush that always accompanied the first whistle being blown. Lugging their heavy trunks behind them, they opened up the first small compartment that they came across, a simple six seater affair, and quickly withdrew into it with twin sighs of relief. Sliding the trunks under the seats, both boys sat down near the window, opposite each other, and smiled a little,

"Well at least we missed being mobbed." Harry noted gratefully. Neville rolled his eyes,

"You've jinxed it now Harry. Next thing you know, people are just going to start showing up like no one's business." He predicted with a sage nod of his head. Harry reached across and hit his arm,

"Shut the hell up. Now you're the reason why it's going to happen... making prophecies like that... you'd give the old quack a run for her

money." He groaned, knowing that no matter what happened, as long as the world kept turning, people would want to come and gawp at him. No sooner had he thought this than the door opened. He managed to hold in his instinctive groan and turned to see who it was. To his joy it was Susan and her friend, Hannah Abbot. He sighed with relief and both girls giggled a little,

"Expecting the fan-girls Harry?" Susan teased, sliding her own trunk under the seats beside Harry's. The boy in question groaned and closed his eyes,

"Actually yes. Seeing as how Green-fingers over there has prophesised it..." he muttered, pointing to Neville with a thumb. The Longbottom Lord simply grinned before adopting a spaced out look that was more than vaguely reminiscent of their divination professor,

"I-I see danger in your future my dear... y-you will die this year...!" he declared in warbling tones that more or less captured the batty professor perfectly. Harry fell backwards laughing, leaving only Hannah and Susan to stand there, shocked,

"T-that was freaking awesome Nev!" he managed to gasp out between his mad laughter. Susan shook her head in a bemused fashion before pulling Harry upright again, using the opportunity to push him further along the seats so that she could squeeze between him and the window. Harry managed to get his laughter under control and sent her a look of mock shock, "You used my weakness to your advantage... how slytherin of you little 'puff."

"And what would you know of being a Slytherin, Potter?" asked a rather cold but distinctly amused female voice from the door. Without turning to the door, Harry smirked,

"A bit early for your annual visit isn't it Malfoy?" he asked before grinning when he was hit round the back of the head,

"Prat." Daphne scolded him with a smile when he turned round, "Now answer the question Potter."

Harry looked around Daphne and saw a very cautious-looking witch with a pale, heart shaped, face framed by long, black hair. He raised an eyebrow,

"I'll answer when you tell me who the rather fetching snake is." His eyes sparkled with mischief, "Beside you of course."

Daphne's normally cold school mask broke and her pale cheeks coloured at the compliment, causing her friend to smirk and push her down into the seat to Harry's left, closest to the door. She waved a little as she sank down opposite her still blushing friend,

"My name is Tracey Davis. But enough about me..." she raked her eyes up and down Harry's body, her gaze lingering on the t-shirt which clung to his chest muscles and biceps, "When did you get so yummy?"

Harry was about to respond when a red-faced Susan pointed at his eyes, almost poking one of them out, without taking her eyes off of Tracey,

"His eyes are up here Davis. Stop trying to undress him with your eyes." She turned her now smouldering gaze back to Harry, "If memory serves he is quite willing to do that on his own when confronted by cute girls."

Harry let out a deliberately exaggerated sigh,

"It was one time Susan. And besides, I was going to get in the pool anyway. The arrival of Daphne and yourself had nothing to do with it." He tried, knowing that the faint red in his cheeks was giving the game away. Daphne, apparently finished with her own blush, leant in close to his ear,

"Of course... no connection at all..." she drawled; her breath hot on his ear and neck. Susan flashed a grin before moving to do the same on the other side of him,

"Not that we were complaining..." she whispered, her voice huskier than Daphne's cool but sultry tones. His eyes went wide and Tracey just had to laugh as his mouth began to drop open,

"Girls stop it. I think you've broken him!" she declared, descending into fits of giggles with Hannah, leaving Neville to smile a bemused smile and shake his head. Susan sank back into her own seat with a giggle of her own but Daphne leant in closer, so that only Harry could hear her,

"Susan wasn't the only one who thought you looked hot..." she breathed, causing a pleasant shudder to run through Harry's body while she slid back to her own seat, smirking. He finally managed to control his mouth,

"Well that was..." he paused for a moment, much to the amusement of those assembled, "Interesting."

Neville rolled his eyes,

"Only you would find being pressed against two of the most beautiful witches at Hogwarts interesting. Every other boy would have passed out." He commented with an amused chuckle. Hannah grinned, a predatory gleam in her eye as she pressed her body against Neville's, causing the boy to tense up,

"And what would you do with just the one Neville?" she inquired, causing Neville to shudder in much the same way as Harry had done not moments before. He shot Harry a look,

"You have my respect for not fainting on the spot." He announced, causing Harry to blush and all of the assembled girls to giggle again. As the mirth faded into a comfortable silence, Harry allowed himself a small smile. He'd been back in the general population of the wider wizarding world for going on ten minutes, the train was moving out of the station and he was comfortably placed between two stunningly attractive witches, neither of them a fan-girl. Overall, his life seemed to be going perfectly at this moment in time.

Which made the inevitable cock up rather expected.

Even with the compartment door shut tight and the noise of the old steam train in motion, the sounds of arguing could be heard approaching the compartment. Harry and Neville shared a look as one of the arguing voices raised in volume sharply, seeming to scold the other. The Lord Potter dug a hand into his pocket, to the confusion of the girls, before pulling out a single golden galleon,

"One galleon says that it's Ron and Hermione." He announced, smirking at the small smile that was emerging on Neville's face,

"I'll take that bet. I say its Ron, Hermione and Ginny." He countered, holding up a galleon of his own. Harry grinned,

"You're on." He shot back, reaching across to shake Neville's empty hand with his own. As they were both leaning back in their seats, the compartment door shot open and a familiar witch with a head of extremely bushy brown hair and a prefect badge pinned to her immaculate school robes stuck her head in,

"Sorry for intruding but have you seen – HARRY!" she screeched the last part, causing Harry to flinch at the sound. Hermione tried to get close enough to hug him but both Tracey and Daphne had their legs stretched out, conveniently blocking entry to the compartment. With a quick glare at the two slytherin girls, Hermione began to jump up and down excitedly, "Harry! I'm so glad to see you! We were so worried! The Daily Prophet named you a fugitive and then you had a trail! By the way Harry, it was completely stupid for you to dismiss the headmaster like that! It's a miracle that you managed to survive in there without him; you know how dense you are when it comes to wizarding rules after all. I mean they're saying that you were let off because you're one of the Seven and Lord Potter but of course that is absurd because your parents were just Aurors after all. And what are all of these people doing in our compartment? Well Harry? Are you going to answer me?"

Harry scowled at his bushy haired friend, letting out a growl that caused her to take a step back in shock at the primal sound and the intensity of his eyes,

"If you would shut up for five minutes then I might explain it to you." He countered, causing the inquisitive witch to go bright red, "Yes, they gave me a trial. No, I was not stupid for dismissing the headmaster as, by that time, I had already won the trial myself. No, I am no longer ignorant of Wizarding customs or my places within said customs, unlike you. Yes, I am actually Lord Potter and am a member of the Seven. My parents were EXCEPTIONAL Aurors I will have you note. And finally, this is just a compartment. You have no degree of ownership over this compartment. If I remember correctly it can be considered to be temporally be the compartment of Lord Longbottom and myself."

Hermione, who was completely caught unprepared for a Harry Potter who could form a logical argument in the face of her mind-numbing rants, said the first thing that came to mind,

"But that means that it's mine and Ron's compartment too, if it's yours." She replied, stupidly channelling Ron with that one sentence. Neville pressed a hand on Harry's shoulder which caused the other Lord to ease back in his seat to calm down. He turned to Hermione,

"I don't ever recall Lord Potter ever giving his rights of property over to the esteemed House of Granger. Come to think of it... there is no House of Granger, esteemed or otherwise, and so you are a Houseless witch trying to usurp the right of property possession by the Lord of a Most Ancient and Noble House." His eyes shone with an intensity that caused Hermione's mouth to drop open at seeing the normally shy boy speak with such conviction, "Which means you have technically entered a feud with the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter as a Houseless challenging a Lord. I suggest you do what you are so fond of and read up on that subject."

Hermione, after taking a few moments to process what Neville had actually said, suddenly became outraged,

"NEVILLE LONGBOTTOM! I WILL NOT BE SPOKEN TO LIKE THAT!" she declared angrily, before puffing up her chest and pointing to her prefect badge, "5 points from Gryffindor for threatening a prefect!"

Harry couldn't help but laugh at this, gaining a glare from Hermione just as Ron showed up behind his bushy haired friend,

"What's going on in here?" he asked, once again his clueless self. Hermione was opening her mouth, presumably to begin another rant, when Harry cut her off,

"We were just listening to Hermione make a complete fool of herself for not understanding some basic rules of the wizarding world." He told his red-headed friend with a grin, watching with amusement as Hermione steadily grew closer and closer to Uncle Vernon red. He shrugged a little and pointed at Neville, "Seems that Lord Longbottom here thinks that Miss Granger has been trying to encroach on my rights as the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House. First mistake by Miss Granger. Then she proceeded to try

and take house points from the esteemed Lord Longbottom here before term has even started and for an 'infringement' which does not exist. Second mistake by Miss Granger."

Ron wisely took a step away from Hermione as said girl finally exploded,

"DON'T YOU TAKE THAT TONE WITH ME HARRY JAMES POTTER! I WON'T ACCEPT YOU LYING ABOUT SCHOOL RULES LIKE THAT! I'M PUTTING YOU DOWN FOR A DETENTION WITH PROFESSOR MACGONAGAL!" she announced in what was possibly the second loudest voice Harry had ever heard, second only to sitting beside Ludo Bagman as he shouted with amplification charm applied to his voice. As Harry tried to regain his wits from the verbal assault, Daphne narrowed her eyes and glared up at Hermione,

"You really are ignorant Granger. Harry is perfectly entitled to take that tone with you as your social superior and after you have already challenged his rights as the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House. Not to mention that he is quite right, you can't take points from Lord Longbottom for his comment even if you could take points before the start of term. Which, as I'm sure you once read in that book you're always raving on about, is not possible for you to do." She argued, her reasoning sound and logical despite the glare she was giving Hermione. Ron decided to put his foot in his mouth at that precise moment in time, by rushing to Hermione's defence,

"Hey! Don't you speak to her like that you dirty little snake!" he shouted, pushing at Daphne's shoulder as his face contorted in anger. Apparently he had only just noticed that both Daphne and Tracey were in slytherin. Both Daphne and Tracey opened their mouths to fire back a scathing remark but Susan beat them both to the punch,

"Oh and you're so high and mighty being a bigoted lion?" she shot back with a glare which was mirrored by the other 'Puff in the compartment. Ron's face reddened to match his hair,

"You're a Hufflepuff! You're supposed to be on the side of the Light! But I guess you're just loyal to this dark bitc-" he began but stopped suddenly when he found himself staring down the length of Holly, wielded by an incredibly angry Harry Potter, who's eyes were

glowing a dangerous green. On his left hand, a ring was sparking with pent up magical energy. Ron's eyes widened even more upon seeing the sparking ring. As the son of a pureblood family, a poor one but still pureblood, Ron had been educated in matters concerning heads of House. Harry bared his teeth threateningly and held his crackling ring up in front of his face,

"The Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter does, from this day and this moment, declare a feud with the House of Weasley in defence of its allies, the Most Ancient and Noble Houses of Bones and Greengrass." His glowing wand tip lightly touched Ron's throat, creating a small cut from the pent up magical energy alone, "In accordance with wizarding law, I challenge you to single combat to take place on the first weekend of term. You are allowed to choose the type of combat this will be, lethal or non-lethal."

Hermione took a deep breath to begin berating Harry but Ron shot her a dark look that immediately made her take a step back. Ron turned back to Harry, now serious and with disgust instead of fear,

"You are willing to fight your best friend for the sake of those dark bitches?" he hissed, his hand obviously going for his own wand. Harry growled, pushing his wand tip into Ron's throat again to cause another cut,

"One more comment like that Weasley and I will change it to a Blood Feud and demand a fight to the death." He grinned, a dangerous glint in his eyes now, "And we both know that you wouldn't live through it."

Ron scowled at his now former best friend,

"So you pick those..." at a growl from Harry he amended his sentence, "Girls... over your friend of four years?"

Harry scowled back,

"Shut up and choose Weasley." He hissed out, his voice bordering on slipping into the snake-tongue. Ron's eyes flickered a little with uncertainty as he realised that his former friend was willing to back up his threats in defence of the two witches. He swallowed his pride, and literally swallowed, before grinding out,

"Non-lethal." He muttered before spitting at Harry's feet, "I'll enjoy breaking you for this Potter."

Neville smirked from the corner,

"That's 'Milord', Weasley. He is the head of his House after all." He commented with a light voice. Ron scowled,

"Shut up Neville, important people are talking here." He shot to the other boy, determined to insult someone now that it was established as hazardous to his health to insult either Daphne or Susan. However, Harry's wand tip poking him again shot that idea down in flames,

"Watch what you say to the allies of my House, Weasley... it's not too late to change this to a Blood Feud." He vowed before putting his wand away and sitting back down in between the softly smiling Daphne and the grinning Susan. Ron turned and stormed away down the train, leaving a gaping Hermione to school her features in a strangely Grandmother impression which reminded Harry of the Headmaster,

"Your mother and father would be disgusted to see you become this Harry..." she whispered in a cutting tone. Harry's eyes flashed in his anger but Daphne beat him to the punch, standing up quickly before slapping Hermione rather soundly,

"Don't you speak of them as if you know what they want!" she shouted, her cool and calm composure slipping away quickly. Susan scowled from the other side of Harry,

"You don't know anything about the world you claim to have learnt so much about. Until you know more than Harry about his new situation, you are not to speak to him, as it has now been established that you can't stop sprouting slander." She cut in with a hiss to her voice. Harry raised a curious eyebrow at Neville, who just gave a knowing smile before shrugging. Hermione promptly burst into tears before tearing away down the train as well, leaving the original group alone in their compartment. Harry locked the door thoroughly with his wand before relaxing back into his chair with a sigh,

"Now that was an ordeal..." he muttered darkly. Susan smiled faintly and kissed his cheek,

"But thanks for defending me Harry." She offered before cuddling up into his side. He was about to give a startled reply when Daphne kissed his other cheek,

"Thanks for caring about a snake like me little lion." She remarked before imitating Susan and cuddling into his side. Harry looked up at Neville with a goofy smile,

"This is the best start to a year ever. I have two beautiful witches attached to my sides and I just won a galleon."

"Damn, I was hoping you wouldn't remember the bet..."

"Not on your life Nev. Now hand it over."

"... where do I put it? Your arms are pinned."

"... blast. A down side to this wonderful predicament."

"I guess I'll just keep it then..."

"No! Now how will I pay for my things?"

There we go. Obligatory Hogwarts Express scene with Ron and Hermione acting like the royal berks that they truly are. Not to mention that Harry just got in the door with both Daphne and Susan for defending their family's honour against Ron.

Next time:

An obligatory Hogwarts beginning of term feast? A confrontation with an old ferret of an enemy? A menace in pink behind the staff table?

Stay tuned for the next exciting instalment of Dragon Ball Z!

Wait...

Wrong one.

For Whom the Bell Tolls... that's the one.

Night all, sleep tight ;)

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

The cliché monster is back, this time poking me until I write a 'traditional', confrontation-with-dumbledore-sneers-from-snape-and-gasps-of-shock-and-horror-from-the-students chapter!

I'd like to take the time to thank each and every one of my reviewers, you have helped make this my most popular story on this site and you constantly act as a reliable sounding board for ideas and nudges to continue writing. This is dedicated to you, the reviewers.

The Beginning is the End is the Beginning

When the train rolled lazily into Hogsmeade station, Harry was already dressed in his school robes with their standard uniform underneath. It was strange but the collar of his shirt seemed tighter than the last time he'd worn it, almost tight enough to restrict his breathing. Of course it could just be his imagination after having worn nothing but V-neck t-shirts all summer. And the he'd made the tie extra tight to make sure that he was immaculately presented, he didn't want to get a detention on his first day after all. He paused and thought about it for a second.

He didn't want to get detention on his first day, again.

Shaking his head, he looked up to see that Neville was tugging at his own collar, obviously experiencing the same tightness, while Susan, Daphne, Tracey and Hannah were giggling at their expense. He shared a look with Neville. Apparently shirts being too tight at the collar was only a problem with shirts, and so did not transfer to the blouses that the girls were now wearing underneath their school robes.

Harry smirked slightly at his disappointment earlier, when the girls had insisted that he and Neville had waited outside for them to get changed. He'd teased them after, sending them out when he and Neville were getting dressed, much to the pouting dismay of both Susan and Daphne. Of course it had all been in good fun and no one took offense or lectured him.

So THIS is what life is like without Ron and Hermione...

He chuckled at his own, private, joke, much to the confusion of the others in the compartment. With a smirk he waved off their confused looks and pulled Daphne's trunk out from under the seat before tapping it with his wand, casting a silent feather-weight charm on it before handing it to her. The slytherin dimpled a little, causing Tracey to howl in laughter at the girly response that the Ice Queen of Slytherin had just shown. Susan pouted to the side and Harry rolled his eyes before doing the same with her trunk, causing her to smile from ear to ear. Hannah gave a pointed look to Neville and he sighed before following Harry's example, much to Harry's amusement,

"Man, she's got you whipped already! What's your secret Hannah?" he asked, planning on teasing Neville for the rest of the week with this little morsel alone. Hannah glared at him playfully,

"I learnt it from Susan. And I'm sure that Daphne has similar skills. Am I right Tracey?" she asked, watching with amusement as Harry's face fell slowly. Tracey nodded with a serious expression that threatened to break as she spoke,

"Oh yes, Daphne will have you round her little finger in no time at all Potter. The imperious curse is nothing compared to two girls on a mission." She said with a sage look and a final nod. Harry looked from a faintly blushing Daphne to a grinning Susan before closing his eyes in defeat,

"Well call me a sucker for punishment... sign me up for the whipping girls!" he declared, causing Daphne to blush further and Susan's smile to widen even more. Neville rolled his eyes,

"Come on Harry, we have to get to the carriages in order to get the school on time." He raised an eyebrow at him, "You remember what happened when you were late to the feast last time right?"

The girls looked confused, as they had obviously not noticed that he'd missed one of the opening feasts. Harry threw his hands up in exasperation,

"It was three years ago Neville! Do you really have to drag it up?" he moaned, much to the amusement of the girls. Neville nodded,

"Well if you will crash a flying car into the whomping willow..." he drawled, casually letting the 'secret' out to the girls. Harry closed his eyes and groaned as the questions flew at him,

"You flew a car?"

"Why didn't you just ride the train?"

"You crashed into the Willow?"

"What was its top speed?"

Harry opened his eyes when silence had descended, to the sight of two rather angry looking witches and two amused witches behind them. And behind them all, Neville was smirking like a certain smug ferret. He shuddered a little as he made the link. Okay, he wasn't that smug,

"I didn't fly, Ron did. The platform was blocked off to me, meaning that it stayed as a brick wall. It was more like it crashed into us. Repeatedly. I'm not sure how fast we were going to be honest, but it did catch up with the train and keep up with it." He explained with a small smile, "All of the questions, and in order too. Happy now?"

Daphne and Susan still had mildly disapproving expressions but both Tracey and Hannah were placated for now. Hoping to steer the conversation, Harry thought of the first thing he could. Unfortunately it was the very uninspiring topic of school,

"So guys... how do you think school's going to play out this year?" he chuckled when they looked confused, "As in, what horrible creature will reside within the walls, besides Malfoy, that will work damn hard to kill me. Dragons and merpeople last year. Dementors the years before that. Basilisk the year before that. Oh and a

Cerberus in my first year, but you guys probably didn't know about that one."

The girls took it as the joke that it was, even Daphne and Susan began smiling again. His attempt to lighten the mood seemed to have worked better than expected. Neville looked at his watch and sighed,

"Look at the time. We're going to miss the carriages if you guys don't hurry up." He scolded them, tutting a little. Harry rolled his eyes but left the compartment anyway, noting that the train was almost completely empty now. Sighing, he picked up his lightened trunk again and made his way off of the train, leading the others along behind him. Once off the train, they all valiantly pushed and shoved against the tide of panicking first years and finally found themselves in front of one of the horseless carriages.

Except they weren't horseless anymore.

Strapped to the front of the carriage in a harness was a strange creature with black, leathery skin pulled taut over sparse muscles and abundant bones. A pair of leathery, bat-like, wings protruded from the upper back of the creature, giving it an almost demonic appearance. But Harry didn't think that it looked monstrous at all. Perhaps he had been spending too much time with Hagrid; but when the creature focused its red eyes on him he felt no malice, only an unexplainable sense of calm as he stared deep into the crimson depths. A hand on his shoulder pulled him back to reality,

"Harry?" came the uncertain voice of Susan. Harry blinked a few times and absently held his hand in front of the creature's snout for it to sniff him. The creature snorted as it sniffed, exactly like a horse. Susan looked even more uncertain by this action and he now became aware that an equally concerned Daphne was watching him from the open doorway of the carriage, Neville, Tracey and Hannah in conversation within. Harry looked from to each of them with a frown,

"Can't you see it?" he asked, noting that the creature was now licking his outstretched hand. Susan's eyes bugged out when drops of saliva seemed to simply appear along the palm of Harry's hand. Daphne suddenly gasped,

"They must be thestrals! They're horse-like creatures that can only be seen by people who've witnessed a death..." she explained, having obviously read ahead in Care of Magical Creatures. Susan frowned,

"Aren't they supposed to be bad omens?" she asked, not liking the absent way that Harry was now running his hand along the flank of a beast that she could not see. Harry chuckled lightly,

"We both know that omens are nothing but superstitions." He stroked the side of the thestral's face and the beast leant into his hand, completely trusting, "Besides, this one's friendly enough."

Daphne frowned,

"But Harry, omens have been proven to be true in some cases. They're examples of fate at work." She argued. Susan had moved forwards and Harry took one of her hands and placed it on the flank of the animal. She tensed a little before beginning to stroke the side of the beast with some encouragement from Harry. Harry looked back at Daphne with a crooked smile,

"I don't believe in fate, Daphne. We all make our own way in this world."

Upon exiting the carriage, both Tracey and Daphne adopted looks of disdain and marched quickly away from the two Gryffindors and the two Hufflepuffs. As Harry turned to Neville with a small grin, both slytherin girls could be heard loudly complaining about being stuck in a carriage with "two Gryffindor Golden Boys" and "two spineless 'Puffs". It was quite amusing that they were laughing about the House stereotypes in the carriage and then perpetuating them outside of it. Of course, Harry knew that both of his friends needed to have the outward appearance of two perfectly-imperfect slytherins in order to survive the Snake House. Harry poked Susan lightly in the middle of the back, causing her to yelp in surprise. He grinned,

"Nope, there is a spine there." He joked, earning himself a twat on the arm from the mildly annoyed girl. Neville rolled his eyes, something he seemed to do a lot around Harry, and all four of them walked through the massive doors into the entrance hall. Harry looked around at the cold stone of the room and surprisingly felt warm inside. Neville noticed,

"Feel good to be home, Harry?" he asked with a small smile. Harry closed his eyes and let the familiar sound of chattering students vibrate off of the hard walls. He smiled,

"I have missed this place Nev... but soon I'll need to find a real home." He commented, opening his eyes and frowning a little, "I suppose I could live with Sirius, if he's free by then."

Susan nodded encouragingly,

"Don't worry Harry, Aunt Amelia won't rest until the truth is told, even if Fudge would rather sweep the whole thing under the rug." She told him, putting a comforting hand on his shoulder. He smiled down at her, causing her cheeks to colour a little,

"Thanks Susan." He replied simply before they all continued their walk into the Great Hall. The usual four House tables were set up at they always were, with the staff table raised above them in the background. Hundreds of students were already seated at their House tables and were already talking excitedly amongst themselves. Harry smiled warmly at Hannah and Susan before waving at them as they went over to the nearby Hufflepuff table. Neville sighed,

"Sucks that we have to sit on our own table for this feast." He muttered, already starting to look and sound more like his old, downtrodden, self. Harry frowned,

"Don't do that Neville. Act like you normally do." He urged his friend, causing the Lord Longbottom to crack a grin that would have, last year, seemed out of place on him,

"Sorry Harry, force of habit I guess." He said with a shrug. Harry patted him on the back with a grin,

"It's cool man, just don't let it happen again." He smirked as he sat down at the table, "You're way more fun this way. Although a bit disturbing at times."

Neville grinned as he sat down beside his friend,

"You're not still sore over that Parkinson comment are you?" he teased, pouring himself a glass of water. Harry's glare was answer enough, causing Neville to nearly choke on a mouthful of water when he laughed. Directly across from them, Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan both had confused expressions on their faces at watching the display of fast-friendship in front of them between Neville and a wizard who was familiar but too well-built to be who he resembled. Dean was the one to ask first,

"Hey Neville, who's your friend?" he asked with a cautious expression. For all he knew, a slytherin could have tricked Neville into believing he was a Gryffindor. The other boy chuckled to himself, causing Seamus to frown,

"What's so funny?" he asked in his Irish drawl. Neville laughed with a grin still plastered on his face, causing his two dorm mates to watch in surprise. The Neville Longbottom they knew would never laugh like that. Harry decided to put them out of their misery and held a hand out for one of them to shake across the table,

"Nice to meet you, my name's Harry Potter." He joked, pulling back his fringe with his other hand to show the distinctive scar. Upon seeing this, Seamus shot up from where he was sat on the bench, his face red with anger,

"Lying again already Potter? Not that I'm surprised." He raged before walking down the length of the table to sit by Ron, who was glaring daggers at Harry down the table. Harry shrugged and offered his hand to Dean instead, who shook it with an uncertain smile,

"Looks like you had a... different summer there Harry." He commented, pointing to his now muscled frame. Harry chuckled a little,

"Well I was due a growth spurt, wouldn't you say?" he joked, noting that Hermione was whispering with Ginny a little bit down the table. Ginny slack jaw and vacant stare told Harry that he was probably the topic of this conversation. Suddenly, Harry felt a very feminine form press against his side. Surprised, he looked to his right to see Lavender Brown pressing herself not-so-subtly against him,

"I'd say the growth did you good Harry..." she purred out his name in such a way that made him have to try hard to hold back a grimace. Having succeeded in stopping his initial reaction, Harry smiled a little,

"Thanks Lavender." He replied briefly, trying to end their conversation. Lavender put a hand on his leg, causing him to jump in his seat a little,

"You can call me Lav..." she purred out again and this time Harry was unable to stop the grimace. Luckily the over enthusiastic girl had turned back to Pavarti to continue whispering and giggling about how "drop dead sexy" he'd become over the summer. Of course the exercise was useless when he was sitting right beside them. He shook his head and turned back to Neville, who was trying valiantly to keep from laughing by holding his sides tightly. Dean was also chuckling, although more in shock that Harry had almost been publicly molested by Lavender Brown at the opening feast. Harry shot Neville a glare,

"You're not helping." He muttered, causing Neville to let out some of the laughter, gaining stares from the other Gryffindors. After a few seconds, Neville calmed down enough to grin,

"I know, I'm your mate. I'm supposed to laugh at stuff like that." He explained, causing Dean to nod in agreement,

"It is a generally accepted part of the bro-code." He commented, completely serious. Neville adopted the serious expression too,

"And we must abide by the bro-code." He noted. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"What the hell is the 'bro-code'?" he asked cautiously. Dean nodded seriously,

"It is an ancient set of rules, set down by our ancestors to show us the way of truly manly friendships without mushy crap." He intoned. Neville picked it up,

"Praise be the bros. Praise be." He chanted, still completely serious. Harry nodded with an uncertain frown,

"I don't know what's weirder. The fact that there is a bro-code or the fact that you two are almost worshipping it as if it was important." He commented with a smirk. Neville adopted a shocked expression and made the sign of the cross with his fingers,

"Blasphemy!" he announced loudly. Dean nodded, a scowl of agreement in place,

"Thou shalt not doubt the most sacred bro-code!" he agreed, equally as loud. Now that every Gryffindor was looking at them oddly, some of the boys with agreement, Harry sighed and buried his head in his hands,

"God I hope Dumbles gets on with his fucking speech soon..." he moaned, knowing that the weirdness would stop once the guys were eating. Stuffing your face often got in the way of weird worship patterns. No sooner had he thought this than the elderly Headmaster stood in front of his podium and called for silence. It took a few seconds, mainly because most of the Gryffindor girls were now in fits of giggles while pointing at Harry, but silence descended. The whole hall looked towards the old wizard, Dumbledore smiled and the damned twinkle in his eyes began,

"Hello and welcome to another year at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry! To those of you who are new to our school, I bid you welcome and hope that your first year at this school is as exciting and as memorable as it has been for every year before you.

I have the usual announcements to make before we beginning our wonderful feast. Firstly, the Forbidden Forest is, as the name suggests, forbidden. Secondly, our caretaker, Mr Filch has asked me to remind you that a list of all banned items is available on the door to his office.

Also, it is my great pleasure to announce two new events that will take place within the school this year. The first is a school ball that will be held on Christmas Eve. I'm afraid that to attend you must bring a date, but the ball is open to all years.

The second, and probably the most exciting event, is the resurrection of an old Hogwarts tradition! This year there will be an inter-house duelling competition which will run throughout the year, leaving the final duel to take place on the last day of the school term.

For safety reasons, only fifth years and above may participate in this event.

This brings me to the last announcement before our fabulous feast can begin, I would like you all to welcome the new Defence Against the Dark Arts teacher, Professor Umbridge."

Harry's head shot up at the mention of the name and he finally noticed the fat shape squished into a set of pink robes. As he watched, she stood up to deliver a speech,

"Thank you for that lovely introduction Professor Dumbledore." She said in her too-sweet voice, which still sent shivers down Harry's spine, even from across the hall. The pink toad of a woman set her shoulders, apparently becoming serious, "The Ministry of Magic has decided to take a more active role in the education of our society's young witches and wizards. I daresay that my addition to the staff is but the first of many changes to the school. After all... we must ensure that you all follow your ministry."

Harry locked eyes with the toad-woman across the hall, neither of them willing to back down from the other. It was obvious to him that the ministry was trying to take over the school in order to control the students and stamp out the "ridiculous rumour" that You-Know-Who was alive once again. With his announcement that Voldemort was back at the end of his forth year, Harry was obviously going to be the biggest target in the school, aside from Dumbledore of course. After more than a minute of awkward silence, during which the whole school became aware of the staring contest between Harry and Umbridge, the Pink Professor snarled and sat back down in her chair, looking away from the fierce expression in Harry's green eyes. Harry blinked a few times to tone down his glare enough not to scare people who accidently had it directed at them. Once he had calmed down he looked at Dumbledore, who was frowning at him from his place at the podium. With a slightly hesitation, Dumbledore clapped his hands and the food appeared in front of the students, in the usual, huge, amounts. As Harry turned to his food, the message from Dumbledore was clear.

He was going to have to talk to the Headmaster.

When Harry turned the corner, the gargoyle protecting the staircase to Professor Dumbledore's office was already opening. He frowned

in confusion before it became apparent why the staircase had formed.

Delores Umbridge was trotting down the stairs.

Harry, not wanting to get detention with the toad on his first day, schooled his features into neutral to try and avoid aggravating her. Of course it was unlikely that he would not aggravate her. After all, it was his Head of House ring which had caused her to lapse into spasms of pain in front of the entire Wizengamot and the Minister for Magic. Thinking about it, Harry would be lucky if she didn't attempt to cast an Unforgivable on him for that humiliation alone.

The Pink Professor noticed Harry immediately, her fake smile disappearing. She made a beeline for Harry, much to his frustration, and stopped him by standing in front of him,

"And where do you think you are going Mister Potter? I believe all students are to be in their dorms by now, as is the rule on the first day on term." She hissed out, somehow making the sound sickeningly sweet like she normally did. Harry frowned,

"My title is Lord Potter, Professor Umbridge. Just because I am back at school, does not mean that I am not the Head of my House." He replied, causing the toad to grow red in the face without any lawful way for her to dispute his claim, "And I am responding to the request of the Headmaster, to meet him in his office after the opening feast."

Umbridge sneered, which was surprisingly not unlike her 'smile',

"Liar." She spat distastefully, "The Headmaster has not so much as spoken to you yet this term. How could he have told you to meet him?"

Harry raised an eyebrow at her accusation before pulling a piece of parchment from his pocket, holding it in front of her face tauntingly,

"A note from Professor Dumbledore arrived in my compartment on the train ride to the castle. So it was a pre-emptive notice, presumably about my summer arrangements." He smiled falsely at the now silently fuming Umbridge, "He really does care for his students, wouldn't you say Professor?"

Umbridge's face now resembled a tomato that had somehow crumpled in on itself to form an angry mess to wrinkly lines and bulging veins,

"Of course." She managed to force out, the words lacking her usual sweetness. Harry smiled again,

"Then I'll see you tomorrow morning then Professor." He told her with a polite nod before side stepping her and moving up the staircase just as the gargoyle began to close. His smile dropped and he spat on the floor as the gargoyle closed completely, "If you want to play a game, Umbitch then we'll play a game. Too bad you don't even know what game we're playing yet."

With a self-satisfied grin, Harry knocked on the Headmaster's door. The knocks pushed the door open so Harry poked his head into the room,

"Professor?" he asked, noting that the room was devoid of the elderly man. He frowned a little and stepped into the office, walking up to the Headmaster's desk to wait. A cheerful thrill caught his attention and he turned, smiling, to see a rather young Fawkes sitting atop his golden perch. Harry held out his arm and the phoenix spread its young wings before gliding down onto his outstretched arm like an owl would do. Bringing his arm back in, Harry stroked the bird's head with his free hand, noting the way that Fawkes would thrill with pleasure when he scratched the back of his neck. A cough from further in the office caught Harry's attention. He raised an eyebrow when he saw that it was the Sorting Hat, who had coughed to get his attention,

"Long time no see Mister Potter." The hat said by way of a greeting. Harry chuckled,

"Indeed it has been. How has the self been treating you Godric?" he asked with a smile, using the name that he'd given the Sorting Hat after his second year. The hat didn't seem to mind too much and actually responded well to the name,

"Same old, same old. Dusty as hell and nothing to do but come up with some stupid song. Or recycle an old one. I swear I haven't even tried in the last fifty years." It grumbled. Harry sighed,

"Sounds like you're stuck in a rut my friend. Join the club." He related with the hat. The worn hat seemed to nod,

"I have to admit that your life isn't exactly something I'd want either." It muttered. Harry chuckled, now scratching the thrilling phoenix under the beak,

"Oh come on, facing near certain death every year is great fun!" he replied sarcastically,

"I do hope that isn't all you see your life here as Harry, a series of near fatal events." Came the remorseful voice of Albus Dumbledore from the door to his personal quarters. Harry stretched his arm out again and Fawkes took wing, landing back on his perch,

"Not at all Headmaster. It has also been a time of lies and deceit." He shot back bitterly. Dumbledore settled himself down in his chair and gestured to the bowl of sweets on his desk,

"Lemon drop?" he offered, obviously trying to redirect the conversation. Harry shook his head,

"No I don't want any of your tainted sweets. Just ask your questions so that I can get back to my dorm and do something more useful than speaking to you, like sleeping."

Dumbledore sighed tiredly before he began with his questions.

What questions does Dumbledore ask? That is up to you, my dearest reviewers. Here is a perfect time for you to ask questions about the story that will be answered as if phrased by Albus-to-many-names-Dumbledore.

Of course, the answers may be withheld by Harry to try and keep Dumbledore in the dark (novel idea eh? Harry keeping Dumbles in the dark...).

Next time;

A question time to kill for! So bring your AK and ask away!

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

Another quick thank you note to all of my reviewers, you continue to be a source of great support.

Last time I asked you what questions you wanted Dumbledore to ask Harry when he began his clichéd interrogation of his weapon. The answers were pretty much what I expected but thanks for reinforcing my initial ideas with your own opinions. I hope I do this part justice.

The End is the Beginning is the End

Dumbledore suddenly became serious, his twinkling eyes now dulled with a set determination, and he leant forwards in his seat to rest his chin on his hands,

"I believe that it is time you told me everything Harry." The old man began, his tone lacking the grandfatherly tone which it usually held, "You have made a great deal of trouble for some people... people concerned with your welfare."

Harry snorted in contempt as he sat down in the chair opposite the aged headmaster,

"You and your 'old guard'?" he asked, resting his own head on a hand to affect a disinterested air about the whole situation. Dumbledore's eyes widened slightly before narrowing a little,

"How do you know about the Order?" he asked; a demanding tone to the man's voice now obviously present. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"I was told about it of course. By a good friend of mine." He replied, noting with satisfaction that Dumbledore's eyes widened a little in surprise. Obviously he had expected him to start spilling his guts like he had done so on many an occasion before, not answer with the same type of half-answers that he himself was so well versed in. Dumbledore nodded to regain his composure,

"May I enquire as to the identity of this friend?" he probed, locking eyes with his young charge. Harry shrugged casually,

"You can ask. I won't answer, but you can ask." He replied without hesitation. Dumbledore's eyes returned to being slightly narrowed, as if in suspicion,

"Your attitude would suggest Sirius..." he muttered, more to himself than Harry. Harry chuckled a little,

"Wrong. Way too obvious. Besides, I'm sure that you have Sirius on a tight leash since you are the only one with the authority to try and push for his innocence." Harry paused and struck an exaggerated thinking pose before an exaggerated idea pose, "But you're not, are you? Amelia Bones is in that particular position!"

Dumbledore shook his head,

"But Amelia does not know the whole story about Sirius and I doubt she would believe you at your word. You are just a 15 year old boy after all." He replied, putting emphasis on his age. Harry scowled and held up his hand, where the Head of House Ring for the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter glowed dangerously,

"I am not just a 15 year old boy, Albus. I am the head of one of the Seven. I am a fully emancipated minor without no underage restrictions." He leant forward in his seat, staring down the old headmaster with a steely glint in his eyes, "And Amelia believes me at my word."

The headmaster was shocked that the Head of the DMLE knew of Sirius' innocence and was working to prove it. If she succeeded then he would lose his leverage over the man, and therefore lose all of his considerable control over the assets of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Black. He pulled away from the desk to put distance between himself and Harry's icy eyes,

"I assume that you will be wanting to live with Sirius this coming summer." He commented, slipping back into his grandfather routine easily. Harry scowled at the way the man thought he was stupid enough to not notice his change in stance,

"Yes, I will be living with my Godfather. As my parents intended." He said the last part with a particular emphasis that Dumbledore seemed to recognise and ignore in the same moment. The old man smiled sadly,

"But the Blood Wards over the Dursley's house make it the safest place for you to live Harry. It is your home." He pressed, knowing that he would lose even more control over Harry's summer life if he were allowed to stay with Sirius. Harry rolled his eyes, settling back in his chair,

"Fuck the Blood Wards." He declared, almost offhandedly. Dumbledore's eyes widened. No student had ever dared to use such language when talking to him. But Dumbledore was intent on milking his 'grandfather' image for all it was worth and so couldn't afford to show his displeasure,

"But the Blood Wards keep your family safe." He tried to shift the focus of the relocation to the Dursleys. After all, the boy's strongest 'failing' was that he cared so much about the welfare of others. This left Dumbledore in shock at his reply,

"Fuck the Dursleys. They deserve to die for what they've done." He commented bitterly. Dumbledore furiously tried to salvage the situation,

"But they are your family, surely you don't wish them dead?" he pushed. He needed to know if Harry was turning dark. If he wanted to kill his abusive relatives then he was turning evil.

At least, that's how Dumbledore understood it.

Harry's face became hard and unreadable,

"They are no family of mine. Their house is no home of mine. And if they die... I wouldn't exactly cry over them." He announced. One of the many silver instruments within Dumbledore's office sparked once

before stopping its rotation. The headmaster looked at the silver object with something akin to fear before turning back to Harry, trying to act as if nothing of importance had happened,

"I think that it would be best to leave the subject of your relatives for now..." he commented, noting the way Harry rolled his eyes at this. He pressed on, "Now I must establish where you went after you received the owl from the Ministry. I sent you an owl that specifically told you to stay put, that there was to be a hearing and that you needed hand your wand over to anyone."

Harry's glare caught the headmaster by surprise,

"You sent an owl?" he asked, his voice barely above a whisper. Dumbledore nodded slightly,

"I sent two, to inform you of the change." He replied, now uncertain as the glare only intensified,

"Owls?" Harry repeated, his voice almost vibrating with barely restrained rage. Dumbledore nodded again,

"Yes, it was the best way to contact you." He concluded, glad that Harry had established that he's sent owls. Harry's fist slammed onto the desk, catching Dumbledore by surprise as the sound vibrated off of the walls and caught the full attention of all of the portraits. As Dumbledore watched, the newly empowered form of Harry Potter stood up from the chair,

"I AM ATTACKED BY DEMENTORS AND PSYCHOTIC MINISTRY HAGS AND YOU SEND OWLS?" he demanded, his voice louder and more forceful than it had ever been before. Dumbledore blinked a few times at the raw rage that his student was displaying towards him. One of the portraits decided to speak up,

"Listen here you punk kid, you can't jus-"

"SILENCE!" Harry roared, waving an angry hand towards the painting as he did so. The headmaster in the portrait was shocked when no sound emerged from his magical frame. Harry turned back to Dumbledore, still in a towering rage that silently demanded answers. Dumbledore kept up his grandfather appearance,

"Harry... waiting for me would have been the best thing to do." He tried to explain with a calm smile. Harry scowled, kicking the chair into the wall as he began to pace back and forth,

"No." he declared suddenly, stopping his pacing as he did so. Dumbledore raised an eyebrow,

"No?" he enquired. Harry turned to look at him again,

"No. The best thing I could have done was what I did." He explained with a harsh edge to his voice but otherwise no more evidence of his earlier anger, as if he had simply cut it off. Dumbledore frowned,

"And what did you do when you left the safety of the Dursleys' home?" he asked quietly. Harry, his earlier anger now blocked by his mental shields, smiled a little,

"Oh you know, this and that." He replied, deliberately being vague. Dumbledore's eyes hardened,

"I must insist that you tell me what you did Harry." He pushed, sending a casual mental probe as he did so. His mental attack was almost immediately destroyed and Harry grinned,

"I'm afraid that you have no right to know Professor. I am not under your authority during the holidays." He replied with a condescending smile. Dumbledore's frown deepened,

"You must tell me Harry... it is for the Greater Good." He tried to explain, causing Harry to chuckle,

"Just like Gellert used to say?" he teased, knowing full well that Dumbledore had had some kind of relationship with the Dark Wizard. Dumbledore stiffened and his tone became heavy and leaden,

"It is nothing like when Gellert would say it." He declared through clenched teeth. Apparently Harry had stumbled upon one of the subjects that caused Albus Dumbledore to become enraged at. He smiled but decided to tread carefully. There was a reason he was feared by Voldemort after all,

"I'll have to take your word for it Professor." He locked eyes with the old man, "If you really do insist upon knowing... I went to Gringotts. I

talked to some Goblins. I then went for a walk and had a very... talented, man give me a bit of a makeover."

He twirled as if on a cat walk. Dumbledore didn't bother pretending that he was still the 'grandfather',

"Yes, it is most peculiar. I must confess that I am at somewhat of a loss as to your new appearance. It is most obviously not down to simply eating right." He tried to disguise his deep probe with some light heart humour. Harry smirked,

"Nice try. I'm not telling you anything about my family secrets Dumbledore." He replied firmly, knowing that he'd dropped the bait by mentioning that it was a family secret. Dumbledore's eyes sparkled a little at the 'slip' before they became serious and dull again,

"Onto more disturbing news... you have cut ties with Miss Granger and Mr Weasley." He commented, a note of disappointment in his voice. Harry began to idly pace the room again,

"Is there a question in there?" he teased. The headmaster obliged,

"Why have you done this?" he asked. Harry tutted,

"My affairs are my own Dumbledore. You wouldn't be trying to pry into the private dealings between two Houses would you?" he asked, a light note of humour still present. Dumbledore drew himself up to his full height while still sitting,

"As headmaster of this school, I have the right to know why a duel is issued between two Houses within the limits of term." He announced firmly. Harry rolled his eyes,

"Very well. Both Granger and Weasley insulted the friend, whom I was sharing a compartment with, and when asked to leave they both replied with slander and encroached on my rights as the Head of a Most Ancient and Noble House." He replied, as if idly reading from a list. Dumbledore frowned,

"May I enquire as to who these friends would be?" he asked, now staring at his student very carefully. Harry smirked,

"You may." He replied curtly. Dumbledore's frown increased,

"But you will not tell me." He summarised, causing Harry to smile in response,

"Right in one Professor." He commented as he idly pulled the chair from the wall and sat down in it near the desk again, "Don't worry though... you'll know by the end of the second day if the rumour mill is half as good as it is supposed to be."

Dumbledore smiled a half-smile. It was true that he would know, one way or another, by around breakfast time tomorrow. He focused on the conversation at hand,

"You have matured greatly over this past summer. Is there any particular reason for this at all?" he pressed, now on the offensive again. Harry's face hardened for a moment,

"I saw a boy only slightly older than me die, right before my eyes, and then had one of my father's best friends cut me open to bring back history's most notorious Dark Lord. I then endured the torture curse from that same Dark Lord before duelling him to a standstill, seeing the shades of my parents, and managing to get out of the graveyard with a corpse instead of the worthy competitor I had come to respect." He raised an eyebrow and some of the tension drained away, "Are you telling me that you think I would just forget about that?"

Dumbledore sighed heavily,

"I am truly sorry that you had to endure so much Harry..." he breathed, in genuine remorse. Harry shrugged,

"I'm not." He declared firmly. Dumbledore looked up at him, puzzled, "It was exactly what I needed. A kick up the backside to get me moving. I saw a young man die, and gained the resolve to avenge and retaliate. I was put under evil curses, and now know exactly what I can expect. I fought Voldemort to a standstill, and gained the resolve to kill him."

Dumbledore shook his head sadly,

"You speak so easily of killing... but are you prepared to take lives in this war?" he asked, counting on Harry's peaceful nature once again. Harry scowled,

"I will kill if I have to Dumbledore, something that you cannot say." He stared deeply in the old man's eyes, "If they take his Mark then they deserve to die."

Dumbledore drew away from Harry again, looking sad and disappointed,

"But everyone deserves a second chance Harry." He tried to press. Harry's scowl deepened,

"People don't change Dumbledore." He declared fiercely before sighing deeply, releasing all of his anger and frustration with his breathing, "Do you mind if I ask the next question?"

Dumbledore frowned; he was close to getting whiplash from Harry's sudden mood swings,

"Of course." He replied kindly. Harry smiled,

"Then can you tell me why you felt the need to draw up a marriage contract between me and Ginny, as my magical guardian, before proceeding to send Molly Weasley a thousand Galleons per year for my 'upkeep'?" he asked, all the while his easy smile still in place. Dumbledore reeled a little in shock. Apparently the goblins had told Harry more than he'd initially thought. He paused for a second,

"I was merely trying to ensure your future happiness." He settled upon after a few seconds. Harry's easy smile didn't move,

"Bullshit." He stated calmly. Dumbledore frowned,

"I was doing my duty as your magical guardian." He insisted. Harry's smile grew wider,

"A position that you usurped from Remus Lupin." He countered. Dumbledore paled a little. Harry had obviously been read his parent's will, "It seems that you weren't even on the list for magical guardians. And it was a rather big list."

Dumbledore paused another few seconds before speaking,

"It was for the Greater Good Harry. The Weasleys are key members of the Light." He tried to argue, before being cut off by a small laugh from Harry,

"So you thought you'd take it upon yourself to promise me to the youngest of those bigots?" he asked with the same easy smile. Dumbledore frowned,

"I would thank you not to slander the Weasley House." He commented firmly. Harry rolled his eyes,

"They are bigots. Except they're the kind of bigots who hate people for what House they are in at school instead of their blood." He paused for a few seconds, "Hell, the Blood Purist retards have a better case than the bloody Weasleys."

Dumbledore slumped in his seat, seemingly defeated,

"Why have you grown so hostile Harry?" he asked, quiet in his disappointment. Harry frowned slightly,

"You expected me to act differently? You've manipulated every aspect of my life that you could get your grubby little hands on." He raised an eyebrow, "I think I'm being rather mature about it to be honest. I've only filed the complaint with the ministry about the funds, which will result in a demand for the funds to be returned, cut off the marriage contract and been a little bit angry about you usurping the position of my magical guardian. Hell, I haven't even pressed the charge of line theft on you and Molly for setting up that marriage contract when you're not a part of my family line."

Dumbledore shook his head wearily,

"But you are carrying such anger within you Harry and I fear that it is leading you down the wrong path." He replied, a pleading note in his voice now. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"You're afraid that I'm going to go dark?" he asked curiously. Dumbledore nodded sadly,

"This rage you are feeling will lead you down the wrong path. You must forgive and accept Harry. It is the only way to follow the Light." He announced with a soft smile, obviously thinking that he'd win Harry back with horror stories of turning dark. Harry's eyebrow remained raised,

"So what you're saying is the way of the Light... is your way or the highway?" he commented with a smirk. Dumbledore frowned,

"I am only trying to lead as many people to the Light as I can Harry." He defended. Harry chuckled,

"That's it isn't it? You think you're the only person qualified to define the Light. Why is that? Is it because of Fawkes?" he held out his hand and the phoenix landed on the outstretched limb without complaint, "Because he certainly doesn't think I'm going dark."

Dumbledore frowned,

"I have years of experience with the Light, Harry. I am more qualified to define the Light than you or many others." He said tightly. Harry nodded,

"So it is a case of 'with me or against me'." He shook his head, saddened slightly, "And here I thought that you could have accepted your mistakes and look beyond your own nose to see the facts."

Harry stood up from the chair before giving Fawkes one last stroke before pushing him towards his perch. Dumbledore looked up at his student with a frown,

"Our discussion has not come to a close Mister Potter." He declared firmly. Harry stared right back, matching Dumbledore's resolve,

"Yes, it is. And I am Lord Potter, Headmaster. You will address me as such." He replied before turning to leave,

"You will report to my office tomorrow at the same time and we will continue this discussion Mister Potter." Dumbledore insisted. Harry turned back to the headmaster and tapped his House Ring on the desk, causing sparks of magic to arch across the metal,

"I am Lord Potter. And I will not be bullied into doing anything, Headmaster." He narrowed his eyes for a few seconds before turning away again, "Good night Headmaster Dumbledore."

As Harry strode out of his office, Dumbledore reached into his desk drawer and pulled out a quill and some parchment. He had a letter to right to Molly Weasley.

As Harry stepped through the portrait into the Gryffindor common room, all of the usual chatter stopped immediately. He sighed, that meant that the whole school had been told about his challenge against Ron. And seeing as he hadn't told them, it was fairly obvious that Ron had been going around, spreading his own unique slant on the story as he did so. Knowing Ron, he probably got darker and more evil with each retelling. He wouldn't be surprised if people were comparing him to Voldemort himself by the time the youngest Weasley male had finished with them. He looked at the assembled Gryffindors and waved sarcastically,

"Hey everybody! Who're we whispering about today then?" he joked, noting the hard faces of most of his School House. Ron was stood in front of most of the fifth years, looking rather smug, and the twins were stood in front of the majority of the older years, their matching expressions obviously showing seriousness and a bit of disappointment. Ron decided, as he so often did, to speak up first and loudest,

"We've been discussing you Potter. After your actions on the train, the House is voting on a censure. Guess who we would be voting about?" he teased, giving Malfoy a run for his money with his smugness. Harry rolled his eyes and rubbed his chin in an exaggerated thinking pose,

"Mmmm... could it be Colin?" he joked, noting that the younger boy was looking very unhappy with the situation. Obviously he was indeed a member of the Gryffindor Harry Potter fan-club. Ron grew red in the face at Harry's joking,

"You! We're voting to censure you!" he shouted, his anger growing with each second. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"Really Ron?" he smirked a little, "I never knew you were intelligent enough to try something like this. In fact... I'm sure that it isn't your idea."

He looked pointedly at Hermione, who was sat in one of the armchairs besides the fireplace, giving him her best McGonagall glare,

"You're rash and foolish actions have brought shame upon our House, Mister Potter." She declared courteously, obviously actively trying to channel their Head of House. After being called 'mister' by both the pink-clad toad and his senile headmaster, Harry was understandably irritated by the title,

"My title is Lord Potter." He declared venomously, causing Hermione to cringe back from his angry gaze. Ron jumped on the opportunity to put his foot in his mouth,

"You see? He's turned into a self-righteous prick, just like Malfoy! He's even got it into his head that he's the Head of a Most Ancient and Noble House!" he declared, trying to incite a fever within the other fifth years. Many of them began to grumble their agreement when Harry raised his hand to show them his Head of House Ring, once again sparking with pent up magical energy,

"My name is Harry James Potter! I am the Last of the Potter line and am therefore its emancipated Head of House! The Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter is one of the Seven, presiding over the Wizengamot!" he declared forcefully. The Gryffindors gasped as a green glow spread from his ring to cover his entire body for a few seconds. Ron, however, was unconvinced,

"Nice light show you bloody liar! That could be done with any old spell!" he shouted and gained much support from the rest of the fifth years. Harry rolled his eyes, once again Ron had proven that to be believed you didn't need to have the most compelling argument, simply the loudest voice. Harry held his hands up in defeat,

"I give up! There's just no fucking helping you people! You're sheep! All of you are mindless peons for the fucktard with the loudest voice!" he announced loudly before sitting down heavily in his favourite chair beside the fire as the rest of his School House huddled together to vote. It took very little time before a very smug

looking Ron stood in front of him with a piece of parchment held out to him,

"There. Every single signature from Gryffindor House. You are now officially an outcast." He declared, pushing out his chest self-importantly. Harry rolled his eyes before skimming the list, frowning once he had,

"Where's Neville's signature then?" he asked idly. Ron sneered,

"That simpering coward was censure before you got here. He doesn't deserve to be a Gryffindor." He declared with a disdainful sniff. Before Ron could even think to react, Harry's bludgeoning spell caught him full on in the gut, lifting him off of his feet and sending him sprawling to the floor a few feet away. The rest of Gryffindor quickly turned round from their remaining huddles to see Harry, in an indescribable rage, pointing his wand right between Ron's eyes,

"Neville Longbottom is twice the Gryffindor you ever will be Weasley. He is twice the friend and twice the man." His voice dipped lower and became even more threatening, "If you EVER insult ANY of my new friends like that again then I will remove you limbs. One at a time. Painfully."

As Ron whimpered in pain on the floor, the twins moved towards Harry,

"That's enough Potter." Fred declared firmly, his own wand in hand,

"Leave our brother alone." George agreed, pointing his wand at Harry's side. Harry cast both of the twins a sidelong glance,

"I thought better of you two." He commented before flipping his wand in his hand so that the handle was pointed between Ron's eyes instead of the tip. He slipped it up his sleeve and into the wand holster hidden within. Both of the twins lowered their wands slightly but didn't put them away as he had. Harry reached up and pulled his Gryffindor tie from around his neck before throwing it into the roaring fire. As the rest of the School House watched, he pulled the crest off of his cloak and threw his entire school jumper into the fire as well. Now suitably Gryffindor-free, Harry bowed mockingly at the rest of his former Housemates, "I would say that it was a pleasure to be

one of you but that would be an outright lie. It has been a torturous ordeal living with sheep in lion's clothing."

As he passed Angelina, on his way up to his bed, he paused,

"Oh and good luck finding a replacement Seeker as good as me, and with their own Firebolt as well... that's got to be tough." He teased, patting the now pale girl on the back as he made his way upstairs to his dorm. Neville was waiting for him, his own uniform similarly disgraced, with a grin,

"Now that was fun." He declared loudly, making sure that those downstairs could hear them. Harry laughed,

"Hell yeah it was." He agreed, equally as loud. Neville smirked,

"I guess that means that there's no House rivalry to keep you from asking Daphne out now is there?" he called down the stairs, dropping all pretence of talking to Harry instead of the eavesdroppers at the bottom of the stairs. Several female shrieks of indignation and horror resulted from that particular shout. Harry hit Neville round the back of the head,

"Prat." He drawled before moving to go to bed. Neville turned back to his friend,

"But there really is nothing to stop you now. Or you could go after Susan instead." He commented, obviously feeling that it was time for friendly bro-advice. Harry smirked as he climbed into bed,

"Why not both?" he asked seriously, leaving a gob-smacked Neville Longbottom standing at the top of the boy's dormitory stairs.

I hope I did the Dumbledore Question time/interrogation well enough for you guys. I also hope you enjoy the censure part, I found it mentioned in one of my favourite Harry Potter stories on this site and I thought it was a good thing to add. This way he can't really get the usual punishment of point-deduction for his actions and only more serious actions get detentions.

And yes, the ground is being set for some really bad blood between Harry and Ron. And I think I should reinforce the point, as one reviewer was getting worried, this story is not turning into a fucking

yaoi story, okay? I don't write gay fiction and am a firm believer that you can look out for a male friend and not want to get into his pants. So... just to recap, not a gay fiction. Harry will be with Daphne and Susan. Neville will be with Hannah, and possibly Tracey Davis.

Next time;

First day of school! Trouble brewing in potions! Dark confrontations in DADA! Pincushions in Transfiguration! Tea leaves abound in Divination! Floaty things in Charms! Critters in CoMC! And boring, boring plants in Herbology!

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

First day of school for the new Harry and the new Neville! I promised you potions; there is a potions class! I promised you Defence Against the Dark Arts; you'd better believe I'm bringing it to you! I promised you Transfigurations; by god I will bring you McGonagall! I promised you charms; the dwarves are bringing it in as we speak! I promised you Charms; Filius Flitwick is in the building!

Enjoy

Of Wolf and Man

Harry groaned loudly as he finally gave into the poking at his shoulder and rolled onto his back, opening his eyes to stare straight up at the canopy of his dorm bed. He stared at the bright red velvet a few seconds before turning his head to the right to glare at Neville, who was kneeling at his bedside with a grin. Harry scowled,

"What?" he asked, as if he had no idea why he'd been woken up. Neville reached forwards and flicked him in the middle of his forehead,

"It's the first day of school Harry. You've got to be early to make a good impression." He joked before standing up, stretching as he did so. Harry groaned again before quickly swinging his legs over the edge of the bed to force himself into a sitting position, should he decide to lose his nerve and try and just melt into his bed again. With a grunt of mild effort he stood up, yawning as he stretched his hands high above his head. Neville shook his head before moving over to his trunk, reaching in to bring out some shower gels and the like. Harry yawned again, idly pulling his overly large t-shirt over his head before throwing it across the room in the general direction of

the laundry hamper. Now dressed only in a pair of boxers, Harry made his way towards the showers with absently scratching his chest. Just as he was beginning to feel another yawn coming on, Dean Thomas stepped out of the communal showers in a dressing gown. The other teen stopped when he saw that Harry's finely muscled chest and arms were adorned with black lines of tattoos. He tapped a yawning Harry on the shoulder to get his attention,

"What's with all the tattoos Potter? I didn't think they were allowed at school." He asked, noting that the symbol in the middle seemed to be moving slightly, as if the ink had only been painted on and was still fresh and liquid. Harry rubbed at his tired eyes and waved it off with his other hand,

"Family thing..." he mumbled before staggering, almost drunkenly, into the communal showers. Finding an unoccupied shower head, Harry worked hard not to slip and crack his head open on the slippery floor. As he approached the shower head, the shower wards activated and vanished his boxers to his trunk. He waved at the shower head and water burst forth at just the right temperature for him; no doubt a benefit of living in a very enchanted castle. He quickly scrubbed the tiredness out of his eyes and washed the rest of his body before waving his hand again to turn off the shower. Walking over the shower ward line again, a fluffy dressing gown appeared on him. Having grown used to having clothing appear on him like this, Harry yawned again before walking over to his trunk to pull out his school uniform. At the bed to the right of his own, Neville shook his head as he started to button up his shirt,

"I don't get it... you're an early bird Harry. Why is it that you only sleep in on the first day of school? Or when you really shouldn't be sleeping in?" he asked as he began rooting around inside his trunk to find his tie, school jumper and school robe. Harry shrugged as he began to get dressed as well,

"Not a clue Nev. Must just be a perk of being me." He joked as he finished getting himself dressed in his black school trousers and stiff, white, shirt. Neville looked up at him from his trunk,

"My jumpers and robes have gone..." he muttered, looking only slightly puzzled. Harry nodded slightly,

"Makes sense. They all have the Gryffindor crest on them." He cracked a grin and pointed to a snoring Ron with a thumb, "And we've been censured."

Neville snorted and rolled his eyes,

"Don't remind me..." he clasped his hand over his heart in mock hurt, "It still shames me to my core that I was not accepted by my peers!"

Harry chuckled as he strapped his wand holster to his right forearm,

"Oh I'm terribly sorry, old boy. I didn't realise you were that concerned with sheep." He joked back with a smirk. Neville scowled playfully as he began to strap his own wand holster into place,

"Prat. Do I look Welsh to you?" he shot back, causing Harry to fake a wince,

"Ouch man... watch what you say. A lot of Welsh people are in this House." He paused for a second to think about it, "I think. I've yet to meet one actually."

Neville shrugged, rolling his sleeves down again to cover his wand holster and wand,

"The prefects kept saying that there were some but I've never seen any." He admitted, undoing his shirt's top button now that it became obvious that he was not going to be wearing a Gryffindor tie. Harry smirked,

"But with the sheer number of sheep in the wizarding world it's not really a surprise they don't let Welshmen in."

"Ouch. Now that was just uncalled for."

"Present company excluded of course."

"Oh. Well that's all right then."

Neville gave Harry a side long glance as they walked down the aisle between the Gryffindor and Hufflepuff tables. Everyone in the Great Hall was looking at the two of them, most of them pointing and

whispering about their lack of most of their uniform and the possible explanations for it,

"Is this what you get all the time?" he whispered, aware that what they were saying was being listened to very carefully. Harry smirked a little,

"Oh this is nothing. Just wait until the Prophet arrives." He looked thoughtful for a few seconds as they sat down at the end of the Gryffindor table, "Or until Snape shows up. Both result in more pointing and whispering than this."

Neville raised an eyebrow,

"Wow... I never realised this before but... it must really suck to be you." He commented with a smirk as he began to pour a glass of orange juice. Harry scowled a little before nodding with a small grin,

"Okay, I'll give you that one." He relented before he began to pile food onto his breakfast plate. Just as Harry was about to eat a forkful of scrambled eggs, Ron showed up in the Great Hall. Harry closed his eyes and silently prayed that Ron was having one of his mildly intelligent days.

"Oi! Potter!"

Apparently he was not.

Harry looked up from his plate, setting his forkful of food down as he did so. If his past confrontations with Ron were any indication then he wouldn't get to eat until it was already cold. He watched as an extremely angry Ron Weasley proceeded to march towards him,

"What is it Weasley?" he asked, neither politely nor rudely. Whispers spread through the Great Hall almost immediately. Ron scowled,

"What the hell do you think you're doing at MY table?" he demanded, trying to look menacing by using his height. Unfortunately for Ron, Harry had had quite the 'growth spurt' and was now taller and more well-built than his former friend. Harry raised an eyebrow at the statement. Apparently Ron was staking his claim to the role of 'Gryffindor Golden Boy' now that he was no longer part of the House,

"Your table?" he asked, causing yet more whispers to ripple through the students. Ron's scowl deepened,

"The Gryffindor Table! You're not a Gryffindor anymore so you don't deserve to sit at the Gryffindor Table!" he shouted, apparently ignorant of the curious students from all of the other Houses. The Slytherins began to chatter excitably about this new development; Harry swore he saw Draco Malfoy's eyes light up with a childish glee. The Ravenclaws began to immediately break into small 'study groups' to try and analyse the situation logically. The Hufflepuffs, always interested in friendships, were carefully remaining quiet so that they could try and figure out how these seemingly good friends were now on last name terms and one of them had been denounced by his House. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"I wasn't aware that being censured meant that I had to eat my meals at a different table. I must have missed that part." He replied with an easy smile, loving how the smile alone seemed to send Ron into Uncle Vernon shades of red. Hermione, sitting a few seats down from Harry and Neville, decided that she was going to be the fount of all knowledge again,

"It was in the second paragraph of the parchment." She told him with that self-important air she got when she knew she was right. Harry scowled down the table at the bushy haired girl,

"Then that must have been part of the censure covered up by the signatures of spineless cowards." He spat back, gaining harsh glares from all of the assembled Gryffindors for his insult. Angelina Johnson stood up, in her own towering rage,

"You take that back Potter! You're the coward here!" she shouted down the length of the table, to the mumbling agreement of the other Gryffindors. Harry shot Ron a dark glare,

"You didn't even fucking bother to tell them the truth did you?" he demanded, his eyes boring into Ron's with such intensity that the red head looked away,

"I told them that you declared a feud on my family!" he defended himself. Harry growled,

"Did you tell them over what?" when Ron looked away again, Harry scowled again, "Of course you didn't. You're a fucking coward."

Slamming his fist down on the Gryffindor table, Neville stood up beside Harry,

"He declared a feud over insults you made regarding some of the Allies of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter." He growled, the edge to his voice shocking most of the assembled students. None of them had ever seen Neville Longbottom, the supposed Cowardly Lion, stand up for one of his friends with such fire. Harry calmed his burning rage to merely a simmering anger. He put a calming hand on Neville's shoulder,

"Leave them Neville. Let the 'Lions' believe what they want." He told his friend. Neville looked like he wanted to argue for a second before sighing and nodding,

"You're right. We're not the in wrong here. And I doubt we need Snape on our asses for starting fights at breakfast." He joked, the earlier anger now seemingly gone. The students closest to the two of them were shocked when Harry's anger similarly disappeared with a grin,

"I don't think he really needs an excuse to try and punish me Nev." He commented idly as the two of them left the Gryffindor table and began walking over to the end of the Hufflepuff table, where Hannah Abbot and Susan Bones were furiously waving at them to come over. Neville looked at the girls with a sigh,

"Looks like we're in for an interrogation..." he muttered to his friend before sitting beside Hannah, opposite Susan. Harry chuckled a little and sat down beside Susan with a bright smile,

"Morning girls! Did you sleep alright last night?" he asked casually, as if he hadn't just had an argument with damn near all of Gryffindor house. Susan's eyes narrowed and she poked him in the side,

"Don't try and act casual buster. What the hell is going on?" she demanded, putting her hands on her hips in the universal way of telling a man that they were in trouble. Harry swallowed nervously,

"Just a little... discussion with my former housemates." He replied with an uncertain smile. Susan's eyes remained narrowed,

"Explain." She demanded simply. Harry winced slightly at her tone,

"Well they decided to censure Neville and I. Seems that Ron has managed to convince them all that I'm the second coming of Morgan La Fey." He mused with a small smile. Susan gave a small smile before frowning and poking him in the side again,

"Don't try and joke around Mister. This is serious business." She told him firmly. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"Really? I just thought that it was a power play by some pitiful sheep to be honest..." he muttered, causing several of the eagerly listening 'Puffs around them to chuckle or giggle at the slight on the Gryffindors. Susan frowned deeper,

"What did I tell you about joking?" she asked with the same firm tone as the last time. Harry smiled nervously,

"Not to?" he asked tentatively. Susan nodded seriously,

"That's right." She replied simply before smiling a little, "So you don't have to wear the rest of the uniform?"

Harry chuckled,

"Nope." He leant in close to her so that she would feel his breath lightly play across the side of her neck, "You get to see me in tight shirts for the rest of the school year... and maybe without them."

Susan flushed pink and dropped her fork to the table as her body went slack at his breath caressing her neck. Harry smirked as he lightly shook her back into full focus. Neville turned to Hannah with a grin,

"Ten galleons says that she faints." He joked. Hannah took one look at the still swooning Susan before nodding firmly,

"You're on."

"I would have thought that even the simplest of you would have learnt by now that you will not need your wands for my lessons." Severus Snape announced, with his customary sneer and sweeping cloak, as he stalked into the dungeon classroom. Harry; stationed at a cauldron as far from Ron as physically possible, rolled his eyes and nudged Neville lightly in the side to tease him. Neville frowned at his friend before returning his attention to Snape. Harry frowned a little. His friend had become very withdrawn at the mere mention of potions with Snape but that was hardly surprising when you considered that Snape had spent more time insulting Neville than actually teaching a lesson in the past four years. The Head of Slytherin House stopped in front of the semi-circle of cauldrons and surveyed the assembled students for a few seconds before focusing a hate-filled glare at both Harry and Neville, "I see that you are determined to ruin at least one of my cauldrons, Mister Potter. Picking Longbottom as a partner is probably going to be more dangerous than your annual adventures in rule-breaking."

Neville stiffened beside him and Harry placed a calming hand on his friend's arm before returning Snape's smouldering glare with his own, cool, stare,

"I think that we will do better than in our previous years Professor." He replied without a hint of anger at Snape's remark, which caused the Potions Master to become angrier, "Oh and my title is Lord Potter, if you don't mind sir."

Snape sneered at that, having apparently spent some time thinking of a way to turn Harry's increase in social standing into a slight against his person,

"Ah yes... further evidence, if any was needed, that you enjoy seeking more fame." His eyes glinted with malice, "It is a family trait after all."

Harry raised an eyebrow,

"I'm lost, sir." He cocked his head to the left slightly, "If I understand you then you are implying that my birth right is something that I obtained in order to become even more famous. Curious. I always believed that being born into something wasn't a conscious effort, otherwise Weasley over there would have been born into a family with money."

Draco Malfoy, Harry Potter's self-styled rival in all things, laughed at the insult to Weasley, who he arguably hated more than Potter. Snape himself seemed conflicted about the rebuttal. If he punished him for it then he would be seen to be defending Weasley, a student even worse than Potter in his opinion. He scowled,

"Twenty points from Gryffindor for improper dress." He settled on with a triumphant smirk. This was usually the point where Potter would make some outburst, losing more points, before sulking in a corner for the rest of the lesson. But Harry just raised his eyebrow again,

"But I am wearing my correct uniform." He replied, gesturing at his plain shirt and trousers. Snape looked like he didn't know whether to grin at Harry's apparent stupidity or scowl at the way he answered back. In the end he gave his usual, ugly, smirk,

"A further fifty points from Gryffindor for cheek." He shot back, suddenly looking rather pleased with himself. Harry chuckled lightly, causing bile to rise up in Snape's throat,

"But Professor, I am not part of Gryffindor House." He nodded in Ron's direction, "Seems that Weasley took offence at my defence of some non-Gryffindor students and is less than pleased with my stance against him in this regard. A feud has been declared between our two families for insults given to Houses allied to my own."

Neville chose this time to speak up,

"And then the little coward decided that he didn't want Harry to be able to show him up in front of the Gryffindors anymore so he got them to censure us both." He supplied, still keeping a firm and unflinching eye on the Potions Master. Ron was going so red in the face that it looked like he would explode at any given moment. Hermione was sending both Harry and Neville death glares, probably more for 'disrespecting' a teacher than in defence of Ron. Snape... well Snape's eyes had almost bugged out and he was angry enough that some of the closer students could see him twitching slightly. The Potions Professor whirled angrily to Ron,

"70 points from Gryffindor for Weasley's... lack of self-control." He spat, clearly in a rage at losing some of his power over Harry and Neville. He flicked a hand towards the blackboard and the writing revealed itself, "Finish it by the end of the lesson and place on my desk."

With that last forceful statement, Snape stalked back to his desk with another swish of his cloak. Ron was now almost frothing at the mouth as he glared at Harry. Hermione was still giving them death glares while she prepared her potion. Draco was giving Harry a calculating look that greatly disturbed the ex-Gryffindor and caused him to turn to Neville,

"Dude... I think Draco's giving me the eye..." he whispered urgently. Neville smirked and looked over Harry's shoulder at the snake. He raised an eyebrow,

"Weird... he does seem to be." He agreed with a concerned frown. Harry swore,

"This is going to be the weirdest fucking year ever."

"Look on the bright side."

"What's that?"

"Pansy's fantasy is getting closer to becoming reality."

"... She's not giving me the eye as well is she?"

"Wait a sec'... yeah. Yeah, she's really drinking you in with her eyes."

"Fuck."

Harry and Neville were the first two through the door to Transfiguration, casually setting their bags down on connected tables. Harry yawned a little as he almost fell down onto his seat. Neville rolled his eyes,

"You have a showdown with Snape and you're still only half-awake." He paused for a second as he sat down as well, "Although that

would explain why you had the showdown in the first place I have to admit."

Harry waved it off as he pulled his Transfiguration texts out of his book bag and set them down on his desk before dropping his book bag carelessly to the floor behind his chair,

"Snape is just an over grown bully. The man needs to grow the hell up." He commented, idly noting the glares he got from several of the entering Slytherins. They all paled in comparison to the towering rage that was Ronald Weasley, who was almost marching towards him. Harry rolled his eyes and turned to Neville slightly, "Ron Weasley makes an ass out of himself in three... two... one..."

"Potter! You've got a lot of nerve pulling that shit in Potions!" he shouted, still advancing on his former friend. Harry turned to look at him with pleasant surprise written on his face,

"But why ever not? All I did was tell the truth after all." He replied with a small smile. Ron's eyes widened and his face tried valiantly to go a shade of red brighter than his hair,

"I've had it with your shit Potter! I'm not going to wait for that fucking duel!" he declared brashly before reaching to pull his wand from his pocket. Harry waved suddenly at someone behind Ron,

"Good morning Professor McGonagall." He greeted the woman brightly. Ron froze, his face a mixture of hope and terror. He slowly turned to see his Head of House glaring forcefully at him from the door to the classroom,

"Mr Weasley! You will be spending this weekend in detention with me for your reckless disregard for the rules and another student's health." She declared firmly, drawing herself up straight as she did so. Ron cowered under her gaze, letting go of his wand,

"Yes Professor..." he muttered, giving Harry and Neville a dark glare before going to sit next to Hermione, who was giving all three boys a glare. Obviously Ron had lost points for breaking the rules. Professor McGonagall's firm glare softened as she looked at her two lost Lions,

"I'm sorry for the behaviour of the students in my house." She told them both with a tiny hint of regret in her voice. Harry simply shrugged and turned in his seat to face the front of the class. Neville smiled a little,

"Don't worry about it Professor... we're not intimidated by sheep." He told her, noting her wince at the insult to her House but without any means to defend them in this case. The Animagus Teacher pulled on her cold and firm demeanour like a cloak before walking briskly to the front of the class. Upon reaching her desk she waved her wand and roughly thirty potion vials appeared on her desk, the disillusionment charm on them having been lifted,

"I have no doubt that you all know of the pressures of the OWL year. You will have seen your fellow students resort to any means in order to study harder." She began to pace up and down in front of the class, "But I won't be stressing their importance in today's lesson. I trust that you know of their importance already. No, today we shall be trying something which an old student of mine once described as... 'Bloody brilliant'."

Anything that caused McGonagall to use a curse word, even as a quote of someone else, was bound to be exciting. Or so the students decided at least. McGonagall stopped pacing in front of her desk and held up one of the potion vials,

"The Animagus Vision potion." She declared, causing excited whispering to break out amongst the assembled students, "One dose of this potion will put the drinker into a trance-like state for around two minutes. In this time, the drinker is shown the animal that they will change into if they are able to achieve their Animagus potential."

Harry and Neville stayed at the back of the line as the excited students began to push and shove to be the first to be issued a vial of the potion,

"So... do you think it would be worth the hassle to learn?" Neville asked as McGonagall began to try and control the rowdy students. Harry smiled a little,

"All depends on what type of animal really. If it's a rat then I think I'll pass..." he muttered with a small scowl. Neville shrugged,

"I guess you're right." He paused a few seconds, "Any thoughts on what your 'inner beast' would be?"

Harry frowned in thought for a few seconds,

"Well... my father was a Stag Animagus..." he muttered, careful not to be overheard by any others. Neville nodded slowly,

"So maybe you'll be in the same category as him. Maybe even the same animal." He reasoned as the line got shorter and shorter. Harry shrugged,

"Maybe. I can't say that I've ever really thought about it too much." He replied truthfully before picking up one of the vials with a polite nod to his Transfiguration Professor. He made his way back to his desk before sitting down in his chair. Neville frowned,

"Why are you sitting down?" he asked, a little confused. Harry smirked,

"We're going into a trance. It doesn't take a genius to figure out that we'll be losing most of our muscle control in our body's effort to relax." He replied, noting that at that very moment, Ron Weasley had fallen to the floor in the trance. Neville grinned and sat down in his own chair,

"Cheers." He joked, knocking his vial lightly against Harry's before swallowing the contents in one gulp. Harry quickly did the same and almost immediately thanked God that he was already sitting down. His entire body had gone numb in such a way that he barely felt connected to any of it. A tugging at his mind told him to turn his blurry vision to the left, which he did so with a neck which seemed determined not to listen to his commands.

Once his neck had finally complied with his command, Harry noticed that he was no longer in the Transfiguration classroom. He was apparently in a forest of pine trees, the tall trees blurring madly. Touching a hand to his face, Harry noticed that he was still wearing his glasses so it was likely that either his head was now officially FUBAR or the world itself was blurry.

Considering his previous experiences with magic, either could be true.

A dark grey shape slowly swam into the same half-focus as the rest of the forest. It was obviously an animal of some kind. The beast was stood on four legs and seemed to be sniffing at him with a long snout or nose. Apparently smelling what it wanted, the animal sat down on its back legs and arched its back so that its snout was pointing directly up into the sky. It took Harry's addled mind a few seconds to realise that the animal was howling at the sky. He slowly looked up at the sky to face an impossibly large, full, moon in the night sky.

Even his drugged mind could make sense of this.

Harry's head lolled back down so that he was looking dead ahead again and he blinked a few times to absorb what he was seeing. The animal had become more defined with his realisation of what it was. Grey fur ruffled in an imaginary breeze and yellow eyes focused entirely on Harry. Immediately Harry realised that at least some part of his conclusion had been wrong. This was not a regular wolf; or at least not one that he knew of. Its powerful body was at least as long as some of the fourth years were tall, around 1.7 meters in length from nose to tail. And it was hardly small in terms of height.

Before Harry could take in any of the smaller details, the beast was bounding towards him in powerful strides and leaps. Harry froze in place when the lupine eyes locked with his again and the large wolf pounced at him. Closer and closer the hauntingly yellow eyes grew until the outstretched claws were almost upon him.

At the contact, the vision of the forest and of the wolf-like creature suddenly blinked out of existence and he gasped to take air into his aching lungs. Quickly taking in several big gasps of air, Harry looked around the room quickly in search of danger. His shoulder blades rose in his back and he found himself growling when he looked at both Ron and Draco. McGonagall's gasp made him quickly direct his gaze to her. He bared his teeth at his Transfiguration Professor as he noted the feline scent she carried.

Wait what?

Harry's eyes widened suddenly as he realised what he had been sensing was something that he could never have hoped to sense before. He shook his head to clear it and looked up at a seemingly delighted McGonagall,

"Mr Potter!" she cried out, almost clapping for joy, "You have a natural affinity for the Animagus transformation! Just like Mr Longbottom!"

Harry turned to look at Neville, who was looking a bit shaken up. He patted his shaking friend on the shoulder to calm him a little before looking back at his teacher,

"What do you mean Professor?" he asked cautiously. McGonagall smiled warmly, something that he had never seen her do before,

"Both Mr Longbottom and yourself shown attributes of your inner animal after you had withdrawn from your trances." She explained, "Mr Longbottom roared loudly at the rest of the class. But you Mr Potter... your eyes turned yellow and became rather lupine in appearance. Would I be right in assuming that you are some form of wolf Animagus?"

Harry thought about it for a second before he realised that he now had an innate knowledge of his inner animal. More importantly, he knew its name. He turned back to his teacher,

"It is a Dire Wolf." He replied softly, not liking the idea that his Animagus form would further mark him as abnormal. All of the Animagi that he had heard of had been of animals that were still alive during the time. The Dire Wolf had become extinct thousands of years ago. The class gasped or glared, as he had expected them to, but McGonagall and Neville both seemed happy,

"Excellent! Both you and Mr Longbottom have been gifted with extinct inner animals. The Canis Dirus, or Dire Wolf, and the Arctodus, or Bulldog Bear, have both been lost to our world for thousands of years." She explained excitedly as she began to write quickly on a piece of parchment, "Think of the implications for Animagus study! This could revolutionise the field!"

Harry and Neville shared worried glances as Hermione's disapproving glare quickly turned into a greedy expression which just reeked of the lust for knowledge. Neville swallowed hard,

"I think our year got even more complicated..." he muttered to his friend. Harry nodded,

"Just when I think the universe can't fuck with me anymore than it already has..." he whispered, readily agreeing with Neville's assessment. McGonagall, as if suddenly realising that the students were still there, waved wildly towards the door,

"Class dismissed! And someone tell Professor Dumbledore that I can't take my other classes today! This is just too good to waste..."

After a brief lunch in the kitchens, Harry and Neville made their way up to their Charms lesson as quietly and as sneakily as they could. They had been trying very hard to avoid Hermione. The bushy haired know-it-all had been hunting them all lunch hour, most likely to try and force them into telling her how they had been able to find both of themselves as extinct animals. After watching Hermione obsess and pick interesting things apart, Harry was in no hurry to meet up with her. Of course he had followed the Bro-code and warned Neville. So that was how Harry and Neville found themselves trying to sneak into the back of the already filled Charms classroom. Thankfully, Flitwick had yet to arrive but the rest of the class had already filed in and filled the first five rows of desks. Both boys turned to each other and nodded in understanding before silently setting their bags down besides the two desks furthest away from Hermione. As luck would have it, Flitwick waddled into the classroom before Hermione could see them. The diminutive Professor lifted himself up onto the top of his stack of books before tapping his wand against his desk to get the class' attention,

"Welcome back for another year of Charms!" the old Professor greeted warmly in his squeaky voice. The Gryffindors smiled back at the friendly Professor but for the most part the Slytherins just regarded the man with either disdain or casual indifference. The Professor smiled wide, "This year is very important to your magical education! I trust that you have all had the importance pressed upon you during the lunchtime speech on the subject..."

Harry and Neville looked at each other, worried for a second, before grinning when they realised that they'd likely dodged a bullet. Flitwick ploughed on with his first-lesson-speech,

"...so I will not bore you by repeating it." He chuckled at the relieved looks he received, "Now today you shall be working in pairs to try and gain an understanding on the Disillusionment Charm. Now I shall pick the partners so no rushing to your friends."

Harry sighed and patted Neville on the back teasingly,

"Sorry Nev but I guess someone else will have to put up with you for an hour and a quarter." He joked with a smirk. Neville grinned,

"You might get Granger." He replied confidently. Harry went white for a second before scowling,

"Don't even joke about that. Besides..." he grinned, "You might get Granger."

As Neville was working through his own shuddering at the thought, Flitwick's voice caught Harry's attention,

"... Harry Potter and Daphne Greengrass... Neville Longbottom and Tracey Davis..." he announced before continuing down the list. Harry grinned and nudged Neville,

"Guess we didn't do too badly." He commented with a grin,

"I might have to disagree with you there Potter..." came a drawling, seemingly indifferent, voice from him. Harry winced at being caught talking about Daphne when the girl was obviously now right behind him. He turned round in his seat to see a bored Daphne Greengrass, with her arms folded impatiently, and a scowling Tracey Davis. Neville patted him on the back sympathetically before standing up and moving to another corner of the room at Tracey's silent nod. Harry sighed and stood up,

"Where too then Greengrass?" he asked, fighting against the urge to flirt outrageously to shatter Daphne's Ice Queen reputation with a well-timed blush. Daphne pointed to an open side door,

"Flitwick has asked me, as the best in the class, to privately tutor you in this charm. Seems that Professor Dumbledore had stressed the importance that you learn this skill." She replied coldly, her blue eyes locked with his. Harry scowled,

"Old man doesn't know when to stop meddling..." he muttered as they both walked into the side room. The side room itself was nothing special, just a store room for extra desks and chairs. Daphne waved her wand in a complex series of patterns and muttered under her breath while gesturing at the doorway. Harry remained silent. He didn't especially want to anger her by messing up one of her spells and he trusted her not to try and kill him. Mainly because his life only ever seemed to be in danger at the end of the school year but never the less he was confident that he was not about to die. Finally finished, Daphne turned to Harry with visibly sagging shoulders,

"It's hard work being me..." she muttered with a sigh before sinking into one of the available chairs. Harry smirked,

"Trade." He asked jokingly. Daphne gave him a tired smile,

"Not on your life." She shot back, without the usual edge that characterised most Slytherin voices when talking to Harry. He shrugged,

"Can't say I blame you." He agreed with a grin. Daphne closed her eyes and sighed,

"But it's strange... I never used to care about my image." She cast a side long glance at him, "Until a newbie showed up as a member of the Seven."

Harry rolled his eyes and sat down beside her,

"Oh don't flatter me. I'm pretty sure I'm not that important." He replied as he idly scratched the back of his head. Daphne turned away from him and he raised an eyebrow, "But I've been wrong before... tell me what's the matter Daphne."

Daphne turned back to him, her eyes brimming with unshed tears,

"You're one of the few people who I've shown the real me Harry... I've let others see only a mask and I don't think I can keep the mask together forever..." she managed to get out, her voice threatening to break down into sobs. Harry, always willing to do anything to avoid a crying girl, wrapped his arms around her shoulders and hugged her tight to him,

"Hey... dry those tears..." he leant back to wipe a stray tear away, "Real snakes don't cry, right?"

Daphne laughed a little at his attempted joke and sniffed,

"I know... but sometimes I don't want to be a snake." She burrowed her head into his chest again, seeking comfort, "I don't want to strive for greatness all of the time..."

Harry sighed and simply held her,

"I know how that feels." He idly rubbed his thumb on her back, "And I won't ever expect you to be constantly going the extra mile to be great. After all... you're already there."

Daphne smiled up at him uncertainly,

"Thanks Harry... I'm really sorry..." she pulled herself up and began to tidy her appearance, "I've never broken down like that before. I promise that it won't happen again."

Harry chuckled and, deciding that she had pulled herself together enough for some flirting, leant in close and grinned,

"If that's what it takes for you to cling onto me like that then I won't complain." He whispered throatily. Daphne's eyes widened and she quickly slapped him on the arm to stop any further attempts at flirting,

"Down boy. I still have to teach you the charm."

"Aww but I want to learn about your charms..."

"You're impossible!"

"I try."

Harry and Neville, after successfully avoiding the homing missile of bushy hair that was Hermione, finally sat down in the Defence Against the Dark Arts classroom. Both of them heaved a sigh of relief. It was the last lesson of the day, even if it was with the Pink Toad, and that meant that they could disappear after dinner so that Hermione couldn't find them. Umbridge waddled into the classroom from the adjacent office and stood behind her desk, smiling sweetly as the other students walked in and began to fill the seats. When Ron drew his wand and placed it on his desk, Umbridge's false smile grew wider,

"You won't need your wands in this lesson." She declared in that sugary sweet voice of hers. Ron looked confused, hardly a new look for him, and Hermione looked annoyed,

"But Professor, what about the practical?" she asked, forgetting her own religiously enforced rule of raising your hand to ask a Professor a question when in the classroom. Umbridge giggled, another sickeningly sweet sound that made Harry want to go and brush his teeth,

"Oh my dear girl... why would you need a practical portion of the lesson? The theory is more than enough to pass your OWLS." She replied while looking Hermione deep in the eyes, as if daring her to go against her. Ron stood up instead; apparently outraged that he would not be allowed to even wave his wand,

"What use will theory do use when You-Know-Who is coming after us?" he called out loudly. Harry rolled his eyes and spoke up,

"His name is Voldemort, you bloody coward." He commented, noting that everyone other than he and Neville shivered, although he suspected that Daphne only shivered to appear normal. Umbridge turned to face Harry, her face stormy,

"Mister Potter..." she stopped short when she saw that Harry's Head of House Ring was sparking dangerously again. Before she could correct herself, Ron decided that it had been far too long since he'd lodged his own foot in his mouth,

"I am not a coward! You're the coward!" he shouted back. Harry turned lazily to face his former friend,

"And how exactly did you figure that one out?" he asked, his voice condescending to the extreme. Ron scowled before smirking,

"I'm not the one who wakes up screaming for Cedric every night." He shot back, now grinning widely at his supposed victory. Harry's face immediately fell into an impassive mask,

"And I suppose you've watched hundreds of your friends die right in front of you. Killed by the betrayer of your parents." He didn't ask a question. His voice was level and measured, a sure sign that his anger had already peaked beyond regular shouting. Umbridge's piggy little eyes sparkled with glee at the potential of the situation and gave Ron an encouraging smile. Ron grinned, now confident that he could get away with anything,

"You're the one who can't go near dementors without crapping himself. Wah wah! Did mummy and daddy up and die on you Potter?" he teased, momentarily forgetting every lesson being Harry's friend had taught him. The other students began to edge away from Ron and moved to get out of Harry's way in case he suddenly launched himself at Ron. Even Draco went paler as Harry's left hand tightened into a fist, pent up magical energy arching over the surface of his Head of House Ring. Ron was blissfully ignorant. Neville put a calming hand on Harry's shoulder,

"Come on mate... just calm down... he's the coward who has to resort to insults to get to you. He, and everyone else, knows that he can't hold a candle compared to you." He told his friend with a small smile. The majority of the students gave a collective sigh of relief as Harry's hands straightened out and he took a few deep breaths to calm himself. Umbridge, looking rather annoyed that Harry had not given her an excuse to give him detention, was about to 'punish' Ron when the Weasley decided that he was going to officially go too far,

"But you're also the boy who lets his uncle into his room after too mu-" Ron began but was stopped rather suddenly when he found that his throat had damn near collapsed. Looking up, he found an extremely angry Harry Potter with a hand wrapped around his throat,

"You snivelling little bastard!" he roared, the sound hitting Ron almost like it was physical. With a growl, Harry threw Ron as hard as he could with one arm. Fortunately, due to the runic enhancements

to his body, he could throw pretty hard. Ron flew through the air a few feet before his back slammed into the edge of a desk, causing him to cry out in pain. When Ron had hit the floor, Harry rushed over and picked him up off of the stone by his lapels. With a growl he slammed Ron's back into the stone wall, winding the red-head, "I told you that in confidence! I told you that if anyone else found out that I would kill you!"

Now in an incredible rage, Harry tossed Ron aside like a ragdoll, sending the lanky boy spinning off of another desk. Harry stood still, struggling to keep his rage under control as he did so. Umbridge smirked triumphantly from behind her desk,

"Detention!" she called out in her sugary sweet voice. Harry growled and cast a glare at her that made her utter a strangled cry. Harry silently stalked over to where a recovering Ron had struggled to his feet. As Ron turned to face his attacker, Harry lashed out with his left fist. The Head of House Ring slammed into the side of Ron's face with enough force to put him on the floor again. Pushing past the weakly resisting Dean Thomas and Seamus Finnigan, Harry knelt down over Ron and slammed the back of his head into the stone floor. As he raised his fist to start ritually pounding Ron's head into red paste, Neville caught hold of his friend's fist,

"Harry, that's enough!" he called out firmly. Harry, still in a blind rage, turned to Neville and they locked eyes. The glare which had silenced Umbridge was met by Neville's cold determination. Harry slowly felt the anger start to drain from him, the red at the edge of vision receding. He slowly stood up and almost fell over. Neville held onto his friend as he started to shake violently before falling to his knees and beginning to dry retch. Umbridge found her voice,

"I WILL SEE YOU EXPELLED!" she shrieked, the sweetness to her voice now long gone. Neville glared at his Professor,

"I think you'll find that is impossible. Lord Potter was given a dosage over Animagus Vision potion and reacted so well with his inner animal that he was given its instincts for a while." He narrowed his eyes, "The rules of the school clearly state that if a student merges his consciousness with an animal, unintentionally, then they cannot be held accountable for any of their actions unless they commit murder. If anything, Mr Weasley should be suspended for intentionally causing mental distress to Lord Potter."

Hermione, who had rushed to Ron's side, looked up at Neville with disgust and fury,

"There is nothing in the school rules about that!" she spat, cradling the disorientated Ron's head in her lap. Neville scowled down at the bushy haired Gryffindor,

"It is in the constitution of the Wizengamot. An attack on the mental stability of one of the Seven. An old law. Punishable by death." He ground out. Hermione looked appalled and was obviously going to launch into a rant about barbaric traditions when Harry spoke,

"No..." he croaked, his throat raw from the retching, "I won't press the charges... and I'll take the detentions..."

Neville frowned,

"You don't have to, Harry." He reasoned. Harry waved it off as he stumbled to his feet,

"No... I won't have it be said that I am some sort of monster who hides behind old laws..." he swallowed hard and looked up at a surprised Umbridge, "How many? When? Where?"

Umbridge jumped a little in shock before finding her voice,

"Um... yes! Two months detention, with me, in my office, everyday at seven o'clock." She decreed, trying to sound imperious but failing miserably. Harry, still feeling drained, nodded lazily,

"Understood." He replied, swaying on the spot. Daphne spoke up from the side of the classroom,

"Perhaps the lesson should be ended here Professor..." she suggested, trying hard to suppress her worry for Harry. Umbridge surveyed the damage before nodding,

"I fear you may be right Miss Greengrass... Class dismissed!" she called out, gesturing for Crabbe and Goyle to carry Ron to the hospital wing. Harry swayed a little more on the spot,

"Thank god for that..." he muttered before fainting.

Wow! Look at the size of that thing! Is it real?

An extra-long chapter for Harry's first day back at school! I do hope that it wasn't too jam-packed. It was going to have Herbology and Care of Magical Creatures in it as well but I just couldn't be bothered to be honest and it was already shaping up to be the biggest chapter.

I hope that no one minds that I gave both Neville and Harry Animagus forms (that they can't access yet) without holding a vote for it. Or that I may have taken some liberties with the potion to reveal the inner animals and the implications of bonding with your animal the first time. But there is a reason why it takes people years to accomplish these things. Harry's main problem now will be trying to learn how to control his inner wolf.

Next chapter;

The grudge match of the decade! Revenge for Ron or justice for Harry? The duel of former friends is the worst!

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

I've been hyping this duel up for a while now and I just hope that I can do it justice now.

Desolation Row

Neville was starting to get worried.

He'd searched almost the entire castle for his friend but Harry hadn't been in any of the places he'd checked. The dorm room was empty, the common room was filled with people trying to figure out ways to get Harry charged with attempted murder and none of the teachers had seen him since he'd disappeared after his... episode, in Defence Against the Dark Arts.

Deciding to try a place he thought that he'd never have to look for Harry in, Neville pushed the door to the library open rather roughly. Madam Prince, the evil librarian gave him a withering glare, which he winced at before quietly closing the door behind him. Once the librarian had turned back to her work, Neville began to look around the library for his friend.

All of the study tables were filled with Ravenclaw students, all of them eager to get their first batch of homework done before the second day began. Shaking his head, Neville headed further into the stacks of ancient tomes towards the most secluded study tables. There, sat at the most isolated and well hidden table, sat Daphne, Tracey, Susan and Hannah. He smiled a little and walked over to the table, noting how Susan and Daphne quickly ended their discussion as he drew nearer,

"Hey guys." He greeted them casually, "Any of you seen Harry around?"

Daphne and Susan both blushed, leading him to believe that his friend had been the subject of their discussion before he'd arrived. Tracey smirked at Daphne before answering,

"No we haven't, I have a feeling that we wouldn't be here if we had." She replied, ignoring the glares she was receiving from Susan and Daphne. Neville frowned deeply but remained silent. Hannah, sensing his mood darkening, put a reassuring hand on his shoulder, having stood up to comfort him,

"Hey... what's the matter Neville?" she asked. Her genuine concern caused Neville to sigh deeply,

"I haven't been able to find him since his little... episode, in DADA." He frowned again, "I was taking him to McGonagall when he told me that he had somewhere else to be."

Daphne and Susan shared a glance before Susan spoke up,

"Maybe he just wants to be alone for a while?" she suggested. Neville's frown remained,

"It was the way that he said it though... as if he was far away. Like nothing else was important at that point." He commented, sitting down heavily in an available seat. Hannah sat back down and placed her hand over his,

"I'm sure he's fine Neville... he's not been out of his depth yet as far as I know." She said in an attempt to cheer him up. Neville smiled faintly but said nothing. Daphne frowned,

"Are you sure there isn't a way for us to track him down?" she asked, gaining confused looks from the others, "Well he always seems to know his way around this place, and when a teacher is nearby if Snape's mumblings about almost catching him are true."

Neville smiled a little wider,

"There is something that allows him to do that." He replied, noting that Tracey was now groaning in defeat while Daphne looked triumphant,

"I knew it! I knew he had a secret that let him do it!" she called out, pointing at her best friend as she taunted her. Tracey rolled her eyes,

"Okay, you win. Potter has a secret to running around the castle and not getting caught..." she muttered in reply. Neville smiled a little more,

"Actually he has two." He told them, causing Tracey to groan even more and Daphne to start an impromptu victory dance. She stopped, blushing, as all of them looked at her as if she'd grown a second head. Susan spoke up,

"I heard a rumour that he has an invisibility cloak." She spoke up. Tracey snorted,

"I doubt it. They're really rare." She commented. Neville smirked,

"That's one of his 'secrets'." He revealed, much to their surprise, "And it's unlike any other that I've seen. He says that it used to belong to his father but it still works perfectly."

Daphne frowned,

"That can't be right. Even the best invisibility cloaks only last a decade or so." She muttered, frowning deeply as she thought. Hannah nodded,

"Yeah, only the one of the Deathly Hallows is that good." She commented with a smile. Tracey laughed at the possibility of the children's story being true and both Neville and Susan grinned a bit at the suggestion. Daphne continued to frown thoughtfully. Tracey spoke up,

"And what about his other secret?" she asked, her famous curiosity now peaked. Neville shook his head,

"I can't tell you that one." At their indignant faces he continued, "It was made by his father and his school friends. It's one of his most

treasured possessions and could be dangerous in the wrong hands."

Susan frowned at this,

"What could be that dangerous?" she asked, doubtful that Harry would have been handed down a weapon by his father and his school friends. Neville smiled knowingly,

"Knowledge." He replied, enjoying the confusion that came from his reply. Daphne coughed, getting the attention of the group,

"Not that this game of twenty questions isn't fun but perhaps we should go back to thinking of where he could be." She suggested. Neville and the others looked a little ashamed at having wandered so far from their original topic. Tracey grinned, suddenly making Daphne feel very wary,

"Maybe we should split up and look for him. That way you've got a better chance of being alone with him while the rest of us can't find the two of you." She suggested, looking away in an obviously faked expression of innocence. Susan went bright red, mostly with jealousy at the idea before Daphne, spluttering and blushing as she was, pointed at her,

"Then we should go around in pairs! I'll go with Susan." She declared, as if challenging her best friend to find a way to turn the statement round in an effort to embarrass her. Tracey smirked,

"Well I have no doubt that he'd love to see the both of you..." she drawled. Daphne caught her meaning quickly and immediately went bright red. Susan thought about it for a second before she too went bright red. Neville shook his head, slightly bewildered,

"Well... regardless of your reasoning Tracey, you're right. We should split up and look for Harry in pairs or threes. We can cover more ground that way." He declared before standing up from the study table, "If none of us can find him by dinner time then we go to the Headmaster and he'll find him."

Daphne and Susan looked at each other for a few seconds before nodding,

"We can do that." Susan replied firmly. Daphne just nodded but Tracey's sniggering caused her to glare a little. Hannah giggled to herself and rolled her eyes,

"Any ideas on how to get a ballpark in which to aim for Harry?" she teased Neville, who smirked a little,

"I know just the guy... Dobby!" he called out the name loudly and firmly, no doubt becoming the focus of Madam Prince's wrath should she find them. The little house elf in question popped into existence in the middle of the table, a pillow case with the Hogwarts crest his only clothing. The little elf looked up at Neville and bowed his head a little,

"Master LongingBottom is calling Dobby?" he squeaked. Hannah giggled at the way that Dobby pronounced Neville's name but the boy in question simply ignored it,

"Dobby, we need to find Harry. Do you know his general location?" he asked the elf, knowing that the Free Elf was probably crazy enough to have tracked Harry, if the stories about him were true at least. The elf smiled wide before nodding his head enthusiastically, making his ears flop around madly,

"Oh yes! Dobby is knowing that Master Harry Potter went up to the seventh floor, sir." He suddenly became grief-stricken, "But Dobby is not knowing what room he be in on the seventh floor. Dobby is an awful elf!"

Before any of them could stop him, Dobby picked up the nearest book and started to bang his head against it repeatedly. Neville, more than slightly horrified, pulled the book from the wailing elf,

"What the hell was that about Dobby? I order you to never punish yourself like that again!" he told the elf firmly. Dobby nodded as he sobbed about 'his failure of Master Harry Potter Sir'. Daphne raised an eyebrow,

"What's on the seventh floor?" she asked everyone, hoping to get a better idea of where to look for Harry. Susan shrugged,

"Lots of empty classrooms I think." She replied, not knowing much about the seventh floor. Neville shrugged as well,

"I think it would be best if we started now then." He nodded towards the door and both Tracey and Hannah followed him out of the library. As she was looking at the upset house elf on the table, Susan was struck by an idea so simple that she was surprised that no one had thought of it,

"Of course... Dobby." She called out to get the elf's attention, "You have a weak bond with Harry because he freed you right?"

Dobby nodded slowly,

"Yes Miss. The bond be weak as Master Harry Potter has not acknowledged it." He told her in his usual squeak. Daphne quickly caught onto Susan's idea,

"Do you think that you could 'pop' to his side?" she asked the little elf. Dobby looked thoughtful for a moment before nodding slowly. Susan grinned at Daphne, who smiled back,

"Then can you take us with you?" Susan asked; the grin still in place. Dobby nodded, his bright smile now back in place,

"Of course! Dobby would not want Master Harry Potter to not have his two witches!" he squeaked out, much to the embarrassment of Daphne and Susan, before grabbing their hands and popping to his master's side.

Harry was sitting down, his eyes focused on the sword in his hand, when the two girls 'popped' into the room with doobby. He looked up from the gem-encrusted hilt of the sword to look up at the two dizzy witches. He raised an eyebrow but said nothing before returning to looking at the way the light from the fireplace in front of him reflected off of the sword's edge. Idly, he spun the sword. The point of the sword, and the spinning motion, proved enough to drill a small hole into the stone of the floor. With mild curiosity, Harry raised the blade to inspect the tip.

Of course it was just a flawlessly sharp as it had always been.

He chuckled a little. You had to respect the goblins; even if it was just for their weapons alone. This sword was most likely older than the castle it now resided in and yet it still performed as if it had been

forged yesterday. The various charms on its blade would have to have been very intricate to even keep it from rusting over the years but the way it was just as perfect as the day it was first ready to use just lent more credit to the popular belief that the Goblin forgers must have access to magic beyond that of any wizard alive. A soft cough stole his attention from the blade. He turned his head slightly to see a nervous looking Susan looking down at him in his comfortable armchair,

"Harry? Are you alright?" she asked quietly. Harry waved a hand and two more arm chairs appeared in front of the fireplace, startling Susan,

"Have a seat Susan. You too Daphne." He called out. Both girls glanced at each other quickly before sitting down in the offered chairs. Daphne frowned a little,

"I'm going to ask the obvious question again; are you alright?" she asked, trying not to sound as concerned as she was. Harry smiled a little before returning his attention to the sword in his hand,

"I'm perfectly fine Daphne... I just needed some space to try and figure something out." He gestured with the sword point to the Sorting Hat, which the girls had just noticed was sitting on top of the fireplace's mantle, "And Godric here has been a major help in that endeavour."

The Sorting Hat opened its brim to scoff,

"You just needed someone to kick you in the right direction." It teased. Harry scowled playfully,

"So would you if you had a wolf in your mind." He shot back, to which 'Godric' seemed to nod,

"Touché Potter. I certainly wouldn't like to have that voice in my head." It replied slowly. Susan frowned,

"So you just needed some time to come to terms with your... instincts as a wolf?" she asked him. Harry shrugged,

"Pretty much." He replied with a casual smirk. Susan's frown deepened as she gestured behind her chair,

"Then why does most of this room look like a forest in Norway?" she demanded forcefully. Harry looked around the back of his own chair to look at the mass of pine trees and snow. The only thing missing from the miniature forest was a chilling wind and some animals. He turned back to Susan and shrugged again,

"I had to go somewhere... where the wolf was comfortable." He smiled, "Thankfully there were no rabbits in this forest."

Daphne shook her head,

"I don't understand it... other Animagi don't go through this when they're not in their Animagus form. Why is it that you feel you wolf instincts when human?" she asked, staring so hard into Harry's eyes that he matched the stare despite his desire to look back at the blade. At this question though, Harry frowned and got a faraway look in his eyes,

"What do you know about werewolves?" he asked after a few moments of silence. Both girls gasped and Daphne clapped a hand over her mouth in horror. Susan recovered fast,

"Are you saying that you're a werewolf now?" she asked quietly. Harry looked shocked as he pulled himself out of his faraway look,

"What? No, it's just a metaphor or something like that." He told her as if it was the simplest thing in the world. Daphne flicked her wand at him and an over-stuffed pillow appeared right in front of him before hitting him round the face once before disappearing again. As Harry was spitting out feathers, Daphne was holding back furious tears,

"Don't you ever scare me like that again Harry!" she demanded, her voice beginning to shake. Harry blinked a few times in surprise before his expression softened,

"I'm sorry Daphne... it's just the best way for me to describe it." He told her, still making eye contact with her. Daphne sniffed before turning away from him to sniff to herself. Before Harry could go over to her, Susan decided to start up the questioning again,

"She'll get better when you find a way to explain without making it sound like you have a life-threatening condition." She told him, her

own bright green eyes blazing. Harry sighed and slumped back into his chair,

"Okay..." he thought about it for a moment before continuing, "Do you ever get the urge to do something? Like... run when it's a nice day or... get the sudden urge to have a certain type of food?"

At Susan's nod, Harry continued,

"Well... that's kind of what it's like." He paused for a second to think of his next words, "But it's different too. The urges I get are... louder for lack of a better word. And a hell of a lot baser."

Now Daphne had turned back to listen to him and both girls were looking at him intently. Harry was too wrapped up in his own feelings at that moment to notice however,

"It's like a voice is constantly urging me to do things or is telling me things." He paused again and both girls held their breath, "It told me the inner animals of everyone in Transfiguration... and how I should treat them. Like Neville... he's a bear and the wolf inside me hates him for it. When I'm around Neville it snarls... snarls at me to protect something. I think it's telling me to protect my young from it but I'm not sure. I don't have any young after all."

He chuckled a little to himself before carrying on,

"But others are worse. So much worse..." he shuddered, "Malfoy is a ferret, ironic I know, and the wolf inside me just screams at me... PREY!"

His suddenly roar caught both girls off guard and they both jumped in surprise before noticing that Harry had just carried on,

"It fills my head with ideas... with sensations that I don't think I should have as a human being. It tells me how to hunt him. What it will feel like to have the adrenaline rushing through my body as I chase him. It..." he stopped for a second, his voice becoming more like a choking sound, "It tells me that it can hear his heart beating. It tells me... what his blood will feel like in my mouth, on my hands, on my teeth or sliding down my throat... constantly. All the time, I feel like a wolf with a human form and not a human with a wolf form..."

He trailed off before letting the sword clatter to the floor, forgotten, as he put his head in his hands to take some deep and shuddering breaths. Susan and Daphne shared a look before they stood from their seats and, as one, moved over to hug him from both sides. After initially tensing at the contact, Harry relaxed into it as he slowly pulled himself together after his small breakdown. Daphne cooed into his ear,

"Don't worry Harry... you're a strong man. I have no doubt that you will keep your wolf in check and that you can master it in time." She told him encouragingly. He turned to look at her sincere eyes and was about to reply when Susan turned his head towards her with a smirk,

"Don't forget about me! I know you can beat this 'flurry little problem'." She told him firmly, smirk still in place. Once again, Harry was about to reply when his head was turned for him. He scowled playfully at a smirking Daphne,

"And in case you need some incentive..." she breathed before leaning in to gently kiss him. Harry's eyes nearly bugged out at the contact. It was better than he'd ever thought it would be, this kissing stuff. Her lips were cool and smooth, much like she was as a person, and sensations like sparks arced towards his brain from the points of contact. When she pulled away, Harry was struck by the fact that the kiss had lasted less than five seconds and yet he'd managed to analyse ever part of it. Thanking his rune of the Mind, Harry was helpless to resist as his head was turned the other way,

"Hey, I thought we agreed that I got the first kiss!" she scolded Daphne playfully. Harry's mind went into overdrive,

"Y-you've been planning this?" he managed to blurt out. Behind his head he heard Daphne giggling while Susan just smirked,

"Of course silly. What did you think we girls talk about in the bathroom?" she teased him. Before Harry could even begin to think of a reply, Susan swooped down and kissed him. This kiss was different from his first in a lot of ways. For starters, Susan's lips were fuller and a lot warmer than Daphne's. And whereas Daphne's kiss had encouraged him to push into her, Susan's kiss involved her pushing her lips more into his. Once again, the kiss lasted less than five seconds but still left Harry's mind reeling, Mind rune or no. As

Susan and Daphne descended into giggles at how his body had seemingly turned to mush, Harry frowned when he heard the pleased growl of the wolf vibrating in the back of his mind. Before he could push it away however it managed to send him more images and urges. He groaned and let his head flop backwards onto the chair. Both Susan and Daphne looked at him, concerned, until he began to mutter,

"Stupid wolf... I'm not thinking about 'making cubs' now..."

Rolling his shoulders to loosen his joints, Harry began to bounce slightly on the balls of his feet. After a few seconds of bouncing he began to simply jump lightly off of the ground with just the strength in his feet, all the while twisting his upper body from left to right and then back again. Finally deciding that he was as ready as he was probably going to get, Harry tone back down to bouncing as he began shaking out his arms and rolling his shoulders again. Neville, standing beside Harry, shook his head with a small smile,

"Is this how you get ready for Quidditch?" he joked, moving to examine some of the strange and wonderful objects housed in the small room just off from the Great Hall. He'd never been in the room but Harry had. It was the same room he'd been in when it had been made abundantly clear that he had to compete in the Tri-Wizard Tournament. To Harry it seemed like a long time ago but it was less than a year ago now. He sighed a little as he finally stopped moving,

"Something like that. Although usually I have a fly on my broom as well." He replied before moving over to a chair in the corner where his clothes for the duel had been laid out. Quickly removing his casual tracksuit, Harry pulled on the black shorts and grey robes. The grey robes were strange, they were form fitting to prevent any hiding of objects other than a wand and he found that it looked more like a muggle muscle shirt than anything else. He turned to Neville who didn't seemed to see anything wrong with the outfit, "You have got to be kidding me. I have to duel in this?"

Neville frowned,

"What's the big deal? All of the professional duellers wear those." He shrugged, "Cuts down on frills that can get in your way and allows the Witness to see that you haven't got any illegal or cursed items

on you. Of course there are no illegal items in a feud duel between members of separate Families."

Harry frowned,

"I find it hard to believe that Ron will be wearing anything like this. After all... hell it feels like spandex Neville!" he finally ground out. Neville raised an eyebrow,

"What's spandex?" he asked, genuinely in the dark about the material. Harry slapped his palm to his face,

"Never mind..." he muttered before picking up his wand in his right hand and taking a deep breath. Neville poked his head round the door before nodding to his friend,

"It's about to begin." He told Harry neutrally. Harry sighed a little,

"I guess it's time to beat the crap out of my former best friend..." he rolled his eyes, "How the hell do I get myself into these situations?"

Neville thought about it for a moment,

"One really crap Fairy Godmother?" he suggested with a smirk. Harry frowned,

"They actually exist?" he asked, somewhat incredulous,

"Of course they don't you idiot, it was a joke." Neville replied with a smirk. Harry pointed at the other boy menacingly,

"Watch it mate, I'm already setting a trend of going out and beating best friends to a pulp." He warned before making his way through the door. Neville rolled his eyes,

"It was just a joke, no need to get all dark on me." He muttered as he followed Harry through the parting crowd of students. It was rather easy to be honest, most of the students immediately backed away from Harry when they realised that it was him. Most of them were afraid of him. Harry chuckled,

"I'm already dark, remember?" he joked over his shoulder. Neville smirked,

"Yeah, Weasley's really been laying it on thick after DADA." He replied as he and Harry reached the edge of the duelling platform, the same length of wood that had been used as the duelling platform in their second year. He grew serious as Harry dipped his hands into a bowl with a potion in it designed to remove any charms or potions he'd applied to his own hands, "So... Umbridge suspended her detentions..."

Harry scoffed as he dipped his hands into another pot to run some fine sand over his hands to gain extra grip,

"Like she had a choice. Dumbledore over-ruled her detentions for this weak so that I would be able to perform for this duel." He scowled, "And he's only doing that because otherwise I can sue him, Umbridge and Weasley for sabotaging my chances at winning the duel by taking my preparation time from me. Along with whatever 'tortures' Umbridge thinks she can try on me."

Neville nodded grimly,

"Well then all that's left is to wish you good luck." He patted his friend on the shoulder before looking around with a frown, "Susan and Daphne not coming up front to wish you good luck?"

Harry shrugged helplessly,

"Damned if I know. I haven't been able to talk to them about our 'relationship' since those first kisses." He replied before quietly taking the steps up to his starting circle at the end of the duelling platform, "Besides... it appears that my esteemed opponent has finally arrived."

Neville looked over at the other end of the duelling platform to see that a scowling Ron Weasley was now waiting impatiently for the duel to begin. He rolled his eyes before looking back at Harry,

"Kick his ass." He said simply before merging in with the rest of the crowd. Harry looked back up at Ron and smirked,

"Gladly." He muttered, watching closely as Snape stepped up onto the middle of the duelling platform. The Potions Master was acting as the Witness for this duel, meaning that it was his duty to act as a

judge in the duel and monitor the two for any illegal actions. He scowled at both Harry and Ron before addressing the crowd, made of every student from forth year and above,

"This is a feud duel between the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter and the House of Weasley. The rules are simple and absolute. There will be no Dark Arts spells. The use of a Dark Arts spell will result in an immediate end to this duel and is grounds for the victim to declare a blood feud." He gave Ron a pointed look at this, no doubt thinking him stupid enough to try something that stupid. When Ron only glared, he continued, "The duellists must start with only their wands but are not restricted to their wands during the duel. It is against the rules to summon a cursed item to be used against your opponent. Breaking this rule will immediately end the duel in favour of the victim. Are the rules clear and understood by the duellists?"

Harry gave the proper response, a respectful bowing of the head to the Witness, while Ron merely growled gave a quick nod. Snape glared at both of them before stepping off of the platform, still in line with the centre,

"The duellists will approach the centre and bow to each other." He commanded, his voice amplified. Harry took twenty measured steps before he was facing Ron in the centre of the platform. He held his wand in front of his face in a salute and Ron did the same, sneering at Harry to such a degree that Malfoy would have been proud,

"I'm going to make you pay for that attack earlier this week you Dark scum." He declared, just loudly enough for the first few rows of the crowd to hear and begin whispering the message to the rest. Harry smirked slightly,

"I beat you without a wand... I won't even have to try with a wand." He taunted back, causing the whispers to grow, along with the red in Ron's face. Before Ron could begin shouting, Snape decided to move it along,

"Duellists will bow to each other!" he commanded, annoyance clear in his amplified voice. Harry bowed his head to Ron, who simply turned and began to walk back to his circle. Harry shrugged and began to walk back to his circle as well, taking deep breaths to prepare himself. He turned on his heel as he reached the centre of the circle and moved slowly into a duelling stance, his knees bent,

his centre of gravity low and his right hand arced over his head as he stood sideways on to his opponent. Ron had struck a similar pose. Snape raised a hand with three thin fingers raised,

"Three!" he declared clearly.

Harry's attention was completely focused on Ron's wand hand, ready to interpret his movements in order to identify his first spell before he could finish casting it.

"Two!" he heard, as if from somewhere in the distance.

He was developing tunnel vision now and he knew it, his entire being focused on his opponent.

"One!" was sounded like a whisper to him now and he had to direct a little of his focus to watch Snape's finger for its slow descent.

Snape's finger curled into his palm and Harry's entire focus snapped back to Ron in a split second, his mouth and wand already moving.

If he didn't know beforehand that Ron was a complete moron then his first spell would have blown the secret. His first spell was the simplest spell that was ever used in a professional duel, it was a spell used to humiliate rather than defeat.

The idiot had sent a disarming spell right down the centre of the platform at him.

With a scowl at not being taken seriously, Harry raised his left hand and batted the red spell away with casual ease. Ron looked momentarily shocked before the hexagon-shaped shield attached to the back of Harry's left hand became visible. With a growl he spun slightly as he shot his next spell,

"Stupefy!" he practically bellowed out, giving Harry ample opportunity to prepare a counter. With another scowl, Harry slapped the spell aside in the same manner as Ron's first attack,

"Come on Weasley! Stop messing around and start fighting!" he taunted, knowing that Ron was quick to anger. True to form, Ron growled before slashing his wand at Harry,

"Reducto!" he called out, aiming the spell at Harry's lower body. No doubt he was planning on making good on one of his most commonly used threats; to hex someone's bits off. Harry smirked a little before spinning slightly to the side to avoid the spell, leaving it to harmlessly smash into the platform behind him,

"Better. Maybe sometime soon I'll actually have to use my wand!" he called out, getting laughs from some members of the audience. Ron fumed,

"I'll show you, Potter! Petrificus Totalus! Bombarda!" he called out in rapid succession. Harry smirked and swiped the first spell away with his duellist's shield before countering the blasting hex with a quick,

"Protego." That was barely above a whisper. The silvery dome that had appeared easily swallowed up Ron's blasting hex and left Harry smiling confidently, "Well done Weasley. I used my wand."

"Expulso!" he called out, probably as loudly as he could. Harry frowned a little as the powerful explosion caused by the spell shredded his protego shield, which had held just long enough for him to not receive any damage. As Ron was beginning to shout out another curse, Harry acted first,

"Confringo." He said sharply, causing the platform beneath Ron's feet to explode, flinging the other boy backwards. Ron quickly pulled himself back up,

"Diffindo multimo!" he cried out, making several slashing motions with his wand in Harry's direction. Harry scowled and began ducking and weaving to avoid the flurry of spells. Ron was drawing on the one trait that could possibly mark him as intelligent; his ability to use a weak form of strategy. As Harry finally avoided the last of the severing curses, he looked up to see a large ball of fire bearing down on him and quickly growing closer. He swore and waved his wand once before he was consumed by the fire.

Of course, Ron immediately assumed that he'd won the match and held up his wand hand as he roared in triumph. Harry laughed as his banishing charm took Ron's legs out from under him and threw him unceremoniously onto his backside. The crowd loved it. Harry's shirt was now a tattered mess, blackened and torn from the flames. His

skin was perfectly fine, albeit now glistening in sweat, and there was no evidence of a burn anywhere on his person. Harry smirked,

"You really thought that was it?" his expression darkened as he banished the remains of his own shirt, revealing his runes to the entire school, "I will beat you Ron. The question is how much I kick you around before then."

The entire student body was muttering and gaping at either Harry's runic tattoos or his very evident increase in muscle mass. As he quickly surveyed the crowd, he could have sworn that he saw Lavender Brown lick her lips and Pavarti Patil faint. Ron was stumbling to his feet again and Harry decided to humour him by at least pretending to give him his full attention,

"I won't lose to you Potter!" he declared predictably before stabbing his wand in the direction of Harry's head, "Conjunctivitus! Expulso!"

The crowd gasped at the use of spells, especially in combination with each other. It was another fairly basic strategy play, blinding an opponent before sending another spell at them to end it quickly. The reason for shock was that the explosive curse was aimed at his head as well, meaning that Ron meant to blow his brains across the Great Hall while he was blinded. Harry frowned in concentration, batting the blinding curse aside with his weakening duellist's shield, and sent a banishing charm at the explosive curse, disrupting it and causing it to detonate harmlessly between the two of them. But the potentially deadly use of spells had forced Harry to take the kid gloves off,

"Lumos Maxima." He chanted, flinging the bright orb of light at Ron's head with practiced ease. Ron stumbled backwards, blinding casting severing curses in an attempt to hit Harry while he was blinded. Harry avoided the only curse to come anywhere close to him before firing again, "Bombarda. Levicorpus. Nox."

As he last spell was cast, the bright ball of light from the Lumos spell disappeared, revealing a very startled looking Ron Weasley to be hanging over a large hole in the platform, suspended in the air by his right ankle. Snape shot Harry a dirty look, which cause Harry to smile,

"My father added it to the Potter Anybook." He said, answering the seething Professor's unasked question. He turned to a struggling Ron, "I think you'd best yield the duel."

Ron grew redder,

"Never! Bombarda!" he shouted, firing the blasting curse right at Harry's chest. Deciding to belittle Ron a little more, he batted the more powerful curse aside with his duellist's shield as he had done so for the weak spells. Even as the pale hexagon of light shattered, Harry knew that there was no doubt that he'd won. He chuckled to himself,

"Aguamenti." He smirked as the simple charm filled the hole in the platform with water. Ron looked wary as Harry waved his wand again, "Liberacorpus."

With that last spell, Ron Weasley fell from the air into the water-filled hole. Harry bowed theatrically to an excited crowd when Ron pulled his head out, now absolutely seething with rage as he watched Harry bow and mock his defeat before his yield. He thought frantically. He needed to beat Potter and he had to do it soundly. Unbidden, a memory forced its way to the surface.

"Fine Ron. I'll show you one spell that I learnt in Egypt." Bill reluctantly told his youngest brother. Ron, a mere thirteen at the time, jumped up and down excitedly at the prospect,

"Can you show me a really tough one Bill? I need to be able to teach Malfoy a lesson!" he told his brother with a grin at the prospect of hurting Malfoy. Bill frowned a little bit before nodding slightly to himself,

"I'll show you a very bad spell Ron." He told his brother, placing a hand on his shoulder to command his whole attention, "And I want you to promise me that you will only use it against Dark Wizards. And only as a last resort."

Ron, now even more excited with the spell, nodded quickly,

"Of course Bill! I promise I will only ever use it on a Dark Wizard!" he promised eagerly. Bill leant back, a little annoyed that his little brother had seemingly forgotten the last part of the promise. He

shrugged a little, putting it off as Weasley Fool-hardy Courage in battle before nodding,

"Alright then Ron." He slowly pulled his wand out and pointed it at the wall, "This is a spell for the Sirius Blacks' of the world, not the Draco Malfoys. Why? Because it's dark, Ron."

Ron's eyes widened,

"But mum will kill you if she finds out you've been looking into the dark arts!" he cried out, almost revealing the secret to the Weasley matriarch right then. Bill rolled his eyes,

"And I'm supposed to just stun a guy who's throwing killing curses? No thanks." He replied before directing his attention to his wand again, "Now the spell is in two parts. The first part is Rumpo. The second part is a target area. For example, arm would be Armo. To make the spell you target the arm you would say, Rumpoarmo!"

As he said the whole incantation, a bright white spell shot from his wand tip to smash into the stone wall, the area where the spell hit being reduced to dust. Bill pulled his brother round to look at him again,

"It's an evil spell Ron, only for use on evil people. It is a spell that makes the bones in the target area literally explode outwards. Use it wisely Ron."

Ron gritted his teeth as he pulled himself to his feet, his wand pointed directly at Harry's exposed back,

"Rumpoarmo!" he cried out, letting the white spell fly at his unprepared opponent. Harry's reflexes made him turn on his heel in an effort to evade the spell and he damn near made it, except for the tip of his left elbow. The white spell went straight into his elbow and his eyes widened as he felt some part of his elbow begin to shift and move under his skin. Acting quickly, he turned his head away from his outstretched left arm and covered his eyes with his right hand.

Then, in a spray of blood and torn muscles tissue, Harry Potter's elbow exploded.

His lower left arm, propelled by the blast, flew through the air to land at the feet of a silently surprised Severus Snape. Quickly, before anyone could think to look for the arm, Snape waved his wand and the severed limb disappeared. He looked around quickly to see if he'd been spotted but found that everyone was still screaming and shouting about the fact that Ron Weasley had blown Harry Potter's arm off in a duel that wasn't even part of a blood feud.

Blood was rushing from the bleeding stump where his lower left arm had once started before going down to his left hand. The red liquid ran smoothly down his side as the remains of his left arms twitched and moved instinctively from the shock he was in. A loud buzzing was block most sound from reaching his ears but he managed to hear Ron,

"That's right! I've beaten Potter! Not so tough now, are you Potter!" he taunted, apparently ignorant of the jeers he was being sent by everyone in the school. Harry was vaguely aware that Neville was having to be restrained by Hagrid to keep from mauling Ron to death with his bare hands. But Harry wasn't vaguely aware of his best friend's struggles because of the shock and, now, massive blood loss. No, he was struggling to hear anything above the pounding of his own heart in his ears. He was struggling to see past the red that was creeping up from the edge of his vision. He was struggling to feel anything other than rage, burning hot fury with a desire to be vented. Slamming down his mental shields, against the pain and the rage of the wolf inside of him, Harry pointed his wand at the still taunting Ron,

"Expelliarmus." He called out calmly, the red light hitting a surprised Ron Weasley in his wand arm. Ron spun round from the force of the spell to face a terrifying sight. Harry Potter, his upper body covered in the black lines of runes and the red light of his own blood, had his wand pointed at him in his remaining hand. What was the most terrifying part of the image was the seemingly impassive expression on Harry's face, as if he had disconnected himself from all of the pain. Harry suddenly scowled, "You broke the rules Ronald Billus Weasley. It's a blood feud now."

The colour faded from Ron's face instantly and much of the crowd went quiet, with the exception of a few gasps, in shock. Professor Dumbledore, who had sat at the back of the crowd and watched all

of the events unfold before his eyes, stood and held his hands out in a calming gesture,

"Now, Mister Potter... let's not rush to any rash decisions..." he warned, his voice booming through the Great Hall clearly despite his relatively low voice. Harry scowled before tucking his wand behind his ear, the only place he could put it now without his left hand and no pockets, and held his right hand up to the enchanted ceiling,

"Sword of Godric! Your chosen calls for you!" he intoned forcefully. The entire hall gasped again as the sword of Gryffindor appeared in Harry's hand. He turned to Dumbledore, his expression one of barely restrained fury before he turned back to Ron, "The Blood Feud will be revoked. When I take what you have taken from me."

Ron's eyes widened and he threw his wand to the floor quickly,

"No! I yield! See? My wand's on the floor! Please! I yield!" he whimpered, falling to his knees with his arms outstretched, pleading. Harry set his expression and raised the sword above his head. Dumbledore started forwards,

"Mister Potter! You will put down that sword this instant!" he roared, all pretence of being the kind grandfather now gone. Harry scowled,

"You don't seem to remember Dumbledore..." he gritted his teeth in anger, "I. Am. Lord. Potter!"

The sword of Gryffindor flashed once as it descended, and all hell broke loose.

I hope that did enough to pacify you people! The duel had a twist, did she not? I hope you're not too angry with me for mutilating my main character. Don't worry; I'm sure he'll find a way around it before it gets too bothersome.

For any of those interested, an Anybook is a blank book which is connected to copies of books in a Family Vault in Gringotts. That way you can read from books in the Family Vault without taking them out each time.

Also, the spell Ron used was one of my own creations. The spell itself is in Latin. Rumpo meaning 'to shatter' and Armo meaning 'arm' (obviously). So Rumpoarmo means 'Shatter arm'.

Also, what has Snape done with Harry's arm? Foreshadowing!

Next Chapter;

Revenge for the one-armed hero! A family divided! Sympathy Sways Sheep!

Disclaimer:

I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

Fallout from the duel and the answers to so many of the questions that reviewers have been asking me. Including; Will Harry get a new arm? Will people notice that Snape Vanished Harry's arm? Will Ronald Weasley die? Does Dumbledore wear a wig?

Wait... scratch the Ron one, no one really cared :D

(s)AINT

The anger that he felt at the moment was beyond words that he could form. As the tremor of impact shook up his arm, his stump of a left arm twitched madly in time with the beat of his severed nerves. His right hand was bleeding now as well; the hilt of the sword had cut into the yielding flesh of his palm upon impact. The target of his anger, one Ronald Weasley, was whimpering and begging for mercy at his feet. As blood drenched his left side, Harry Potter came to a sudden realisation.

He wanted to kill.

And despite a tiny little voice in the back of his mind telling him that it was his Inner Wolf's instincts that were causing him to feel this way, he knew differently. He knew, deep down, that he wanted to kill Ronald Weasley. Unlike his arch-enemy, Voldemort (not Draco Malfoy, as the blond ponce liked to think), he felt no desire to cause him suffering or to revel in his pain. No. He just wanted to kill him, to take his life and present it before whatever God the weakling in front of him believed in.

Ron had stopped whimpering now, apparently aware that he wasn't going to die right then.

Because the Sword of Gryffindor, which had been beginning to swing down towards him, was now embedded in a thick, floating, wall of solid stone.

The rough edges of the stone suggested that it had been conjured, and the broken stone below it suggested that it had once been quite thicker. But the result was the same as if it had been a real section of wall; the Sword of Gryffindor had sliced through most of it before coming to an inevitable stop, its point sticking through the final layer of stone to point right between Ron's eyes.

Harry shook with anger, and no small amount of physical shock through the loss of his left arm, as he turned his gaze to the left, past the now stunned and silent crowd, to fix his blazing green eyes with the Headmaster's light blue. As their eyes locked, neither man backed down. Harry's burning anger against the traditional calm of Albus Dumbledore.

Even to someone who had not seen the duel, or the brief confrontation after it, it was painfully obvious that the old man had stopped the one-armed man taking his revenge by blocking his sword with a conjured wall of stone.

The whole school, almost one at a time, became aware of the battle of wills being waged between the two men with just their eyes. Even Madam Pomfrey, who was almost rabid in her desire to rush to provide Harry with medical aid, stopped in her tracks as she became aware of the almost palpable battle of wills going on between the two most famous people at the school.

Professor Dumbledore gave an almost invisible shake of his head and his eyes became suddenly saddened, as though Harry had greatly disappointed him. Harry snarled and pretty soon found himself growling in rage. Many of the closer students took steps back as his hackles raised and his eyes flashed yellow for a second. Finally, the eyes returned to the deadly green colour they were known to be and Harry's growl turned into a scowl. Unrestrained magical energy ran down the length of the Sword's blade, from Harry's fingertips, before blasting outwards. Although it affected only a small area, the blast of energy propelled the magically conjured

stone in hundreds of different directions as it exploded outwards. Ron yelped like a wounded dog as some of the tiny flakes of stone fell on him. Harry glanced down at his cowering opponent before spitting at him, his spit made entirely out of blood. The Sword of Gryffindor disappeared, slowly, from Harry's hand and did not seem to re-appear anywhere else in the Great Hall. Letting some of his anger drop, Harry turned to a white-faced Madam Pomfrey,

"I believe I may need medical attention." He told her, with a half-smile before almost falling to the floor as his knees shook and wobbled under him. Madam Pomfrey rushed to his side and conjured up a magically suspended stretcher as she began to cauterise the massive wound,

"You've lost an arm and a lot of blood, Lord Potter." She scolded lightly, apparently knowing that scolding was not an appropriate response to an injury this severe, "You're more likely to need a miracle than medical attention..."

Harry chuckled a little as he settled himself down on the floating stretcher,

"Well I'm always doing the impossible... what's one more time?" he joked, his head now swimming and feeling very light. Madam Pomfrey frowned and tapped him firmly on the forehead,

"I don't appreciate gallows humour from my patients." She scolded him as she tapped her wand to the floating stretcher to order it to follow her. Professor Dumbledore moved in front of her path,

"I'm sorry Poppy but Mis- Lord Potter and I need to have a word in my office." He told her, his eyes sparkling madly and his kindest smile in place. Poppy Pomfrey frowned sternly,

"You can discuss things with him later. After I deem him healthy enough for questions." She told him firmly. Dumbledore sighed and adopted a soft, sad, expression,

"Of course that is what I want as well but things like this must be nipped in the bud." He told her, now looking over her shoulder to see a very lucid Harry Potter staring back at him. The young Lord scowled,

"My medical care comes before your concerns Headmaster." He told the older man with an air of finality. Dumbledore frowned slightly,

"Very well Mist- Lord Potter. I shall see you later, in the hospital wing." He replied before swiftly walking away. Harry sighed as he looked back up at the ceiling again,

"I think I need a drink Poppy..." he muttered to the Hogwarts' matron. Madam Pomfrey gave him a stern glare,

"You won't be drinking any spirits until your blood levels have been restored. And I don't recall giving you permission to use my first name." she scolded, her expression softening towards the end to let him know that she was mostly joking. Harry chuckled a little,

"I thought with all the time we'd spent together over the years that we would have past the formalities." He teased right back as he was levitated from the stretcher to his usual hospital wing bed. Madam Pomfrey smiled slightly as she summoned several bottles of Blood Replenishing Potions and set them all down on the side table before uncorking one and handing it to Harry. He sighed and Madam Pomfrey had to stop herself from laughing,

"I know you don't like the taste but you've lost a lot of blood." She frowned a little, "By rights you should be dead by now. I assume that it has something to do with your unique... body art."

Harry gulped down the bitter potion before chuckling slightly,

"You would probably be safe to assume that." He told her before taking another of the potions, suddenly very aware that Madam Pomfrey was waving her wand over him, "What tests are you performing?"

Madam Pomfrey gave her patient a stern glare,

"I don't see why I have to explain my practice to you Lord Potter. You are the patient here and I am the healer." She told him firmly. Harry's expression hardened,

"These marks on my body are a family secret. I have a right to know if you are examining them in anyway and the right to tell you to stop

immediately." He told her, his own voice just as firm. Madam Pomfrey frowned,

"I am simply trying to scan you for signs of physical shock. You displayed symptoms on the duelling platform but now..." she gave him a pointed look, "I can find no evidence of physical shock."

Harry locked eyes with the matron,

"A family secret." He repeated, never breaking eye contact. Madam Pomfrey nodded briskly before bustling away to retrieve her equipment for re-attaching body parts. As the healer was busy searching, the doors to the hospital wing opened and Neville, Susan and Daphne burst into the room. Upon locating his bed, both Susan and Daphne raced to his bed, while Neville made a beeline for him. Harry had little time to prepared before he was wrapped up in a tight hug around his shoulders, from both sides, by two very concerned witches. When they finally broke away from him, he smiled as they sat down in the seats provided at his bedside,

"Nice to see you too girls." He greeted with a lop-sided smile. Susan hit him in the right arm, his only remaining arm, and looked to be on the verge of tears,

"How can you joke about this? You've lost an arm!" she screamed, tears breaking free now as she burrowed her head into the crook of his shoulder. He wrapped his arm around her shaking shoulders as she cried into him, turning his attention to an equally distraught Daphne. He offered her a weak smile, which she shook her head at before hiding her head in her hands. Looking down at his left side, Harry saw the smooth skin that Madam Pomfrey had caused to grow over the end of what was left of his other arm. Neville sat down in the chair beside Daphne and let out a long sigh,

"That was... well that was your own fault." He told his friend bluntly, not even attempting to beat around the bush. Daphne looked up at him in horror and Susan looked up from crying into Harry's shoulder to give him an incredulous look. Before either of the girls could say anything, Harry nodded grimly,

"I know." He replied simply, causing both girls to shoot him confused looks. He sighed a little and closed his eyes, "I toyed with him. I had

the power to decimate him the second I stepped onto the platform but I decided to play to the crowd and bait him. It was my own fault."

Both girls now looked appalled with him. Daphne hit him on the shoulder, careful to avoid hitting the stump of his left arm,

"You insufferable bastard! You don't get to joke about this! Do you have any idea how worried we were about you? How worried we still are?" she screamed at him, on the verge of tears. Harry's expression hardened,

"I went into a battle and took it as a joke Daphne." He moved his stump, noticing how both Daphne and Susan flinched while Neville didn't, "I deserve this Daphne. This is the price for taking a fight as anything less than a deadly struggle for survival. This is the price for a warrior making a mistake in war!"

Daphne flinched back a little at his harsh tone, despite the fact that it was wholly directed at himself. Or perhaps that was why she had flinched. Either way, Harry turned away from the Slytherin girl to stare straight up at the ceiling of the hospital wing. Susan pulled her head away from his shoulder a little, causing him to look down into her blood shot eyes,

"Can you buy back what the lesson cost you?" she asked; her voice harsh and rough from her earlier sobs. Harry frowned a little, looking back up to the ceiling in order to think about it. A tense silence descended as his friends waited for his response. Eventually, he nodded,

"Give it a day." He told them, noting the relief that all of his friends were now displaying,

"Good to see that you won't be judging yourself too harshly Harry." Came the slightly mischievous voice of Albus Dumbledore. Harry scowled and looked down from the ceiling to see a group of people that he really did not want to see. The headmaster, Severus Snape and the entire Weasley family. Their expressions varied but all of them were pretty typical from what he knew of them.

Dumbledore's eyes were twinkling madly; obviously quite pleased with himself now that he had brought in some of the people Harry

had wished to see the least. Probably why he felt safe enough to call him by his first name without another shouting match.

Snape was sneering. That was pretty much all he did in the presence of a Potter so it didn't really tell Harry anything about the man's mood.

Molly Weasley, as he'd expected, was frothing at the mouth (not quite literally but not far off), glaring hatefully and was evidently trying not to start screaming at him.

The others were just as predictable but nowhere near as important. Arthur looked lost and quiet, Ginny was jealously glaring at Susan and Daphne, the Twins looked conflicted, Charlie was giving him a firmly disapproving stare, Percy looked disgusted at being in the presence of his family for some reason, Bill was alternating his glare between Percy and Ron while the youngest male was almost hiding behind Molly, apparently scared shitless of the one-armed Lord. Shocking everyone in this new group, Neville was the one to respond,

"I'd thank you not to joke about Lord Potter's condition, Headmaster." He commented stiffly, giving Dumbledore a glare which startled the old man. Snape turned his sneer to Neville,

"So... Longbottom is attempting to grow a spine by mindlessly following Potter..." his sneer grew, "How... predictable."

Neville opened his mouth to respond when Harry caught his eyes and shook his head,

"Don't worry about him Neville." He looked at Snape out of the corner of his eye, "Why would the opinion of a murdering, raping piece of shit matter anyway?"

Snape's eyes bulged at the insult and he made to advance on Harry when Dumbledore put a hand on his shoulder to stop him,

"Calm yourself Severus." He commanded the potions master. The greasy-haired potions professor scowled but took an obedient step back. Harry smirked and made a kissing noise,

"Good little Death Eater. Kiss the ass and step back." He taunted. Snape growled and his hand went for his wand. Dumbledore shot him a fierce glare, which stopped the man in his tracks,

"You will behave yourself Severus." He commanded, a lot more forcefully this time. Snape scowled but he left his wand alone to cross his arms over his chest. Neville chuckled,

"Man, he's really got you whipped." He commented, not being able to resist getting in a jab against his least favourite professor. Snape scowled even more but was wise enough not to rise to the bait. Dumbledore gave both Harry and Neville disapproving looks,

"Boys, I would have thought better of you." He said, his voice taking on the tired and disappointed tone it did when he was trying to keep from getting angry when trying to act the grandfather. Neville rolled his eyes while Harry simply stared at the Headmaster,

"I believe you wanted to speak to me." He scowled, "Speak, old man."

Molly Weasley, now at the end of her limited self-control, moved forwards so that she was glaring straight at Harry from the end of his hospital bed,

"Now listen here you little hellion! How dare you talk to the Headmaster that way? After all he's done for you, you would treat him like this?" she raged, her voice growing louder and louder. She was about to continue when Harry sat completely upright in his bed, shocking everyone was his sudden movement,

"No, you listen!" he roared, his own voice dwarfing Mrs Weasley's. The eyes of the every member of the Weasley family widened, unaware that anyone could shout louder than their Matriarch, "This man has done nothing for me that did not suit his own ends! He placed me with my abusive Muggle family, against my parent's will! He manipulated me into joining the house he wanted me to, denied me my heritage and chose my friends for me by careful positioning. He appoints himself as my magical guardian despite a list of preferred guardians in my parent's will. And then, to make matters even worse, he tries to give away my family line by setting up a marriage contract with your bitch of a daughter!"

Daphne, Susan, Ginny and Molly were all in shock at the end of this speech. Daphne and Susan had known nothing of the marriage contract made for Harry by the Headmaster and it sent sparks of anger running to their cores. Ginny looked like she wanted to cry but she kept her hateful glare on the two girls beside Harry, focusing particular malice on Daphne. Molly, as was her usual response to most things, became blinded by rage,

"Now see here! We took care of you, you miserable little blighter! We took you in when no one else wanted you and w-" she raged but stopped short when she found Harry's wand tip now pointed between her eyes. She blinked in surprise and looked around to see that everyone else was just as shocked. Harry had drawn his wand before any of them could respond. Looking down the length of wood, she saw something that chilled her to the bone. Harry didn't look angry anymore, he simply looked cold and indifferent. His wand tip sparked dangerously,

"You know who you remind me of, Mrs Weasley?" he asked, his voice cold and hard. The red haired woman shook her head slightly. He scowled and his eyes flashed yellow, "You remind me of my uncle. My fat, drunk and abusive uncle. He said exactly the same thing before he put my head through a window. He said something roughly similar when he broke my leg and then proceeded to break the other after I cried out."

He had drawn closer to her now, letting her look deep into his eyes and willing her to see the indifference he viewed her life with now. The woman's eyes widened fearfully and he knew she'd gotten the gist of it but decided to add to it,

"Now tell me Mrs Weasley..." he narrowed his eyes, "How would you react to that statement? Should I react, as you so often do, with blind anger? If the answer is yes... well then Professor Dumbledore will be trying very hard to find a potion to get grey matter out of his robes."

Dumbledore had had enough. He pushed Molly to the side slightly to break the paralysing eye contact she'd held with Harry, giving his pupil a withering glare,

"You would threaten Mrs Weasley's life?" he demanded of him. Harry stared back coldly,

"Not without just cause, no." he suddenly smirked, "But she didn't need to know that."

Molly's eyes widened immediately and she went to resume her rant when Dumbledore waved a hand carelessly, wandlessly silencing her. Dumbledore gave Harry a pointed look,

"I am very dis-"

"Yeah, yeah, you're disappointed, blah blah blah." Harry interrupted, irritably, "Now was that all you wanted to do? Sick Molly Weasley on me?"

Dumbledore frowned deeply,

"No, Mis- Lord Potter." He caught the slip before Harry could correct him, "I wish to discuss your actions after Mr Weasley had surrendered the duel to you. While it is true that his methods were less than ideal..."

"Less than ideal?" Susan shouted, startling Dumbledore as he had not expected the Hufflepuff to stand up to him, "He used a deadly Dart Arts spell! That is not 'less than ideal'! It is something he can, and will be if I have a say, be sent to Azkaban for. I personally thank god that he wasn't powerful enough to actually use it properly."

Ron looked offended by the insinuation that he was magical weak but stopped short of actually saying anything to Susan when Neville caught his eye and glared at him. Dumbledore turned to the Hufflepuff,

"My dear, I don't believe that this conversation has any relevance to you..." he said in a forced polite tone. Susan growled a little and Harry had to pull her back a little at the shoulder,

"My aunt is the head of the DMLE, I'd say that she's be most willing to hear how the Headmaster of this school blatantly tried to cover up the use of a dark spell by one of his students." She snarled, getting a small pat on the back from Daphne, who looked very pleased with the Slytherin-like outburst of the Hufflepuff. Dumbledore went white before smiling warmly,

"I assure you Miss Bones that Mr Weasley will be punished for his actions... a number of detentions have been lined up. You can rest assured that Mr Weasley will be writing lines about this incident for the rest of the school year." He replied, trying to appease the girl. Harry's face once again drained of all emotion,

"Detention?" he asked quietly. Before Dumbledore could rush to reassure him, in order to cut off his obviously hidden anger, Ginny Weasley decided to follow the family tradition and put her foot in her mouth,

"For a whole year! It's not even his fault! He thinks you're going dark because that snake slut is influencing you." She glared venomously at Daphne,

"Ginny." Harry said, trying to get her attention while controlling his anger. Ginny ignored him,

"It's obvious that she's got you on love potions. Maybe even the Imperious Curse!" she ranted, channelling her mother's pig-headedness,

"Ginny." Harry tried again, his voice firmer this time. Still, Ginny ignored him,

"I say we take her away and lock her away in Azkaban for using the Imperious." She seethed, "After all, that's the only way she could ever take your affections from me."

This bit caused Harry to look at Ginny in shock for a few moments before he burst out laughing. Ginny looked taken aback as he howled with laughter, while Daphne was smirking at what she knew was coming. Harry managed to pull himself upright again, whipping away a tear,

"What are you talking about? Affections?" he asked, still trying to get his giggles under control. Ginny frowned, confused,

"Of course. We're meant for one another. You must have known." She pressed, her eyes taking on a mad glint that unnerved Harry slightly. He frowned, the obsessive behaviour finally breaking through the absurdity of the initial claim,

"Are you kidding me? Why on earth would I love you like that?" he frowned a little deeper, "As a sister maybe but as anything more... that's just not going to happen."

Ginny's eyes widened and it was obvious that her heart was breaking,

"B-but I look just like your mother! You like your father! Everyone says we look good together, just like your parents!" she cried desperately. Harry continued to frown,

"How would you looking like my mother make me like you?" he raised an eyebrow, "Sounds like some kind of pure-blood fetish to me..."

"Hey!" Daphne muttered while playfully hitting him in the shoulder, causing him to grin at her. Ginny was beginning to shake as it began to set in,

"B-b-but you saved me! In my first year you saved my life!" she called out, now obviously clutching at straws. Harry shrugged,

"No offence but I would have saved whoever had been taken into the Chamber. It's kind of what I do." He replied casually, growing distant from the conversation as the pain relief potions began to kicking in from earlier. Without any further prompting, Ginny broke down into tears before racing out of the Hospital Wing. He sighed and rubbed his eyes, "That could have gone better..."

"How could you break her heart like that? I knew you were going dark!" Ron roared before trying to lunge at him, unsuccessful because the Twins were holding him back. Harry frowned,

"I'm turning Dark just because I don't love your sister?" he asked incredulously. Molly Weasley, who had apparently finally managed to silently dispel her mouth so that it worked again, rose in support of Ron,

"Ron is right! You are turning Dark! Not only are you not following Professor Dumbledore but you've broken my daughter's heart!" she scowled darkly at him, "You're a monster. James and Lilly would be appalled."

Harry rolled his eyes,

"And here it comes... the whole 'use the memories of his parents to manipulate him into doing what you want' routine." He waved it off, "I doubt very highly that the opinion of my parents was exactly the same as Molly Bloody Weasley."

Molly fumed,

"You're going to be joining He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named! Aren't you?" she screamed, reaching for her wand. Arthur Weasley surprised everyone present when he showed a backbone that wasn't whipped by his wife and grabbed her wrist to stop her attacking Harry,

"No, he's not going Dark Molly." He told her firmly, "He's being a man and taking a stand for what he believes in. That is independence, not Darkness."

Harry physically felt his estimation of Mr Weasley increase as he stood up for him against his tornado of a wife. Before Molly could break out of her surprise, Bill went to stand beside his father,

"I'm with dad on this one." He declared, shocking the rest of the Weasley family, "I taught Ron a dark spell, and I will accept the punishment for that, but I taught him with the belief that he would use it against Dark Wizards, not the first person to disagree with him. The narrow-minded approach of this family is closer to the Malfoy's than any of you would care to admit and it sickens me."

Charlie scowled at his brother,

"Are you comparing us to those Death Eaters?" he demanded, now in a glaring match with Bill. The Twins looked at each other for a few seconds before nodding and moving to stand beside their father and one of their older brothers,

"We've been acting..." started George,

"... like the pricks we say we fight against and..." continued Fred,

"... we've had enough of it." George finished, with Fred nodding in agreement. Ron looked incredulously at the Twins,

"You're going to side with Potter?" he asked, shouting as usual. Neville sneered,

"You sound just like Malfoy." He commented, causing Ron to grow a very interesting shade of red,

"Shut it you little squib! The Wizards are talking!" he shot back hatefully. Harry frowned,

"Don't you talk to Neville like that." He told Ron firmly. Molly seemed to regain her voice at this point,

"Don't you talk to my son like that you Dark Wizard!" she declared hotly. Susan gasped in disbelief and Daphne shook her head,

"Did you miss something? Your son was the one to cast the Dark Arts spell!" she reminded the Weasley Matriarch. Molly shot her a seething glare,

"Don't you speak to me you snake slut! You're just as Dark as he is!" she declared, just as loudly as she had done before. Harry scowled,

"Don't you speak to her like that!" he shouted, once again managing to shout louder than the red haired woman. Charlie looked at Harry is disgust,

"How can you sit there and defend a snake? Where's your Gryffindor pride?" he demanded, showing exactly how prejudice the Weasleys were. Harry held up his hand, scowling at the scarred Weasley,

"Right here. Sword of Godric! Your chosen calls for you!" he declared. A second later, the Sword of Gryffindor slowly materialised into his hand. He rested the blade lightly on his shoulder, "Would the sword respond to me if I went against the teachings of Godric Gryffindor? I don't think so."

Molly took one look at the sword and lost it once again,

"Give me that sword you little Death Eater! You've corrupted the Sword of Gryffindor! I'll see you and your little Death Eater slut of a girlfriend in Azkaban for this! The dementors will be your punishment

for the rest of your life!" she cried out, reaching madly for the sword. Arthur Weasley once again stopped his wife,

"That's enough Molly!" he shouted. Molly pulled back before slapping Arthur round the face,

"Stop acting so stupid and help me you insufferable little man!" she raged. Arthur scowled at his wife, something that he'd never done, before pushing her away from the bed,

"No Molly. You're the one in the wrong here, not me." He replied firmly. Charlie rushed to his shocked mother,

"What the hell do you think you're playing at Dad?" he demanded as he tried to support his mother, who was apparently feeling faint at the moment. Bill stepped forwards to stand beside his father,

"He's being a man and standing up for what he believes in." he said simply, weathering the glares from Charlie and Ron. Percy, who had been silent through the proceedings, shook his head stiffly,

"All of you are still blinded by your loyalty to madmen. Potter or Dumbledore, it makes no difference." He put on a small bowler hat before turning walking out of the hospital wing. Arthur watched his son walk away from his family and the pain showed on his face, despite being in the middle of a fight with the rest of his family. Molly took this opportunity to get over her shock,

"I won't have Death Eater sympathisers in my house! You will all apologise to me and the Headmaster or you won't be setting foot in my house again!" she thundered, bringing out her largest threat. While Bill and the Twins looked a little nervous at this, Arthur gained a steely expression that hadn't been seen on his face since the first war,

"The house is mine, Molly." He told her firmly, causing her to slip into a stunned silence again. She tried to take a step closer to him,

"But Arthur..." she tried to implore. Arthur Weasley scowled at his wife,

"You think I'll cave just because you're using a softer voice? That I'd just forget how you tried to kick me out of my own home for my

beliefs?" he shook his head, "I think it would be best if you, Charlie and Ron went to live with your mother for a while."

Molly turned to a surprised looking Harry and her previous uncertainty turned to anger,

"You! You've destroyed my family!" she screamed, trying to dive at the boy in her anger. Bill pushed his mother away, equally as angrily,

"No Mother, your narrow minded view of the world and your inability to accept the truth is what is destroying this family! And if you want any hope for rebuilding it then you will leave." He looked his mother dead in the eye and didn't flinch as her children often did, "Now."

Molly sniffed once, partly in sadness and partly in anger, before nodding towards the door and storming out of the hospital wing with Charlie and Ron in tow. Harry shook his head,

"Guys... you really didn't have to do that." He told them. Bill shook his head,

"I taught my brother a Dark spell and he used it in keeping with the pig-headed views of my mother and not his own judgement." He held out a hand, "But let it not be said that I don't seek to rectify my mistakes. Standing with you is the right thing to do Harry. I'll see you later."

Bill gave his father a brief hug before walking out of the hospital wing. The Twins nodded to Harry,

"We're sorry about..."

"... the censure thing Harry..."

"... we should have known..."

"... that Ron was talking his usual BS." The two of them chorused. Arthur smiled lightly, a sad smile, and clapped them both on the shoulders,

"Language boys." He scolded them lightly. Fred and George smiled to themselves before waving goodbye and following their older brother out of the hospital wing. Arthur turned to Harry as the last of

his sons left the room, "Don't blame yourself for this Harry... it's been a long time in coming but it was always going to happen. Take care."

The Weasley Patriarch nodded to the hospitalised boy before walking out of the hospital wing as well. Harry fell back onto the bed again with a sigh,

"Great. I've broken apart a family." He muttered to himself. Neville shrugged,

"Looks more like Mrs Weasley and Ron broke a family apart to me. You just broke a fan-girl's heart." He observed. Harry frowned at him,

"Not all that comforting Nev." He told his friend lightly. Neville grinned,

"Wasn't trying mate." He replied. Daphne kissed his cheek lightly,

"I think it's sweet that some of the Weasleys believe in you that much." She told him, causing him to smile slightly. Susan, not to be out done, kissed his other cheek,

"And I'm personally glad that you've cut off the worst of your fan-girls." She told him, causing him to grin. Neville smirked,

"Evidently you've not heard about Parkinson..." he teased. Harry paled at that,

"Don't bring that up again. I'm in hospital man, give me a break." He pleaded. A polite but irritated cough caught his attention and Harry turned to see a very frustrated Madam Pomfrey standing at his bedside,

"I'm ready to reattach your arm Lord Potter." She told him, somewhat more gently now as the procedure was very painful. Harry sighed, he's hoped to wait until tomorrow to let the lesson sink in fully but Madam Pomfrey looked very insistent,

"Alright then, where's my arm?" he asked her. At her blank look he turned to the still listening Dumbledore and Snape, "Well? Where's my arm?"

Dumbledore had the good grace to look uncomfortable while Snape looked positively gleeful. He frowned,

"What's wrong?" he asked the headmaster. Dumbledore sighed a little,

"I'm terribly sorry my boy but Severus is a fully licenced Witness for duels and part of the job is to Vanish waste materials made in non-rubble duels such as yours..." he told him softly. Harry's eyes widened,

"You're telling me that my arm... my arm is..." he tried to vocalise the thought but he kept drawing a blank,

"Gone." Snape supplied with way too much joy in his voice for Harry's liking. Susan, Daphne, Neville and Madam Pomfrey were all outraged,

"How could you do such a thing?" screamed Susan, already worked up from Ron and the Weasleys. Madam Pomfrey grabbed Snape by the shoulder,

"Do you expect me to believe that you can't tell the difference between a severed body part and a piece of wooden platform Severus?" she thundered, causing the potions professor to adopt a bored mask,

"What can I say Poppy... reflex." He replied, shaking out of her grip to walk away. Dumbledore looked at Harry with large, sad, eyes,

"I'm truly sorry Harry but... you won't ever get your arm back." He said, trying to comfort his student. Surprising everyone, Harry shrugged,

"Oh well. I have a remedy anyway. Just thought this way would be easier." He shrugged again, "Guess it will have to be tomorrow that I get it back."

Dumbledore shook his head, taking Harry's confidence for denial,

"Harry... you're not getting your arm back." He repeated. Harry waved the headmaster's concerns away,

"I'll see you at dinner tomorrow and I'll wave, once, with each hand."

Omakes!

Harry and Neville go to Vegas!

Neville: So Harry... we still on for our trip to Vegas?

Harry: *rolls eyes* I don't really need two hands to play poker now do I?

Neville: *sniggers* And I suppose you'll be better at the slots too.

Harry: *smacks Neville upside the head*

Neville gives Harry a high-five!

Neville: Alright! High-five!

Harry: ...

Neville: Oh. Right. Sorry.

Sirius gets a date!

Sirius: *putting on cologne* I'm telling you Remus... this is going to be so awesome!

Remus: *looks over the top of the Daily Prophet* What is?

Sirius: *rolls eyes* I've got a date!

Remus: *eyebrows raised in shock* Really? As in, with someone not in the Order?

Sirius: *grins* Yep!

Remus: *frowns* But you can only leave when in dog form...

Sirius: *looks uncomfortable*

Remus: *realisation dawns* Are you telling me you're going to meet a dog?

Sirius: *looks embarrassed* Well a guy has needs... and lord knows I'm not going to satisfy them with Hestia Jones!

Remus: *crooked grin* I thought you could take care of your own needs as a dog...

Sirius: *scowls* Oh come on! I told you, I was cleaning myself!

Remus: *looks back at the Daily Prophet* No one needs to clean themselves like that for two hours Sirius.

Yes to the omakes? I like the idea of adding some humour to some chapters which require a bit of confrontation and Sirius (Sirius: haha! Very funny!) business. Oh and you can submit your own omakes to me by Private Message if you want and I'll work it in at the end of one of the chapters.

This is not an excuse not to review!

Next Chapter;

The one-armed warrior verses the toad! Regrowth and renewal!

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

General response to the reviews for the previous chapter; the chapter was meant to leave more questions than answers so that this chapter could be such a large clean up. In short... it's time for some Sirius Business people!

I fought the law (and the law won)

Harry yawned once again as he and Neville made their way into the Great Hall for breakfast, once again ignoring all of the whispers and pointing that erupted when they were spotted. Of course, this time it wasn't because of a daily prophet article or any of Harry's near-death adventures. This time all of the students were whispering and pointing at the space where Harry's lower left arm used to be, now absent thanks to the efforts of Ron Weasley and Severus Snape. Hannah waved at Neville from the Hufflepuff table and the boy grinned,

"Seems that we're being summoned." He muttered to his friend as he went around the end of the Hufflepuff table to sit beside Hannah. Harry sighed as he sat down opposite Hannah and Neville,

"Great. I get all of breakfast to listen to you two flirt and watch you making eyes at each other. Oh don't worry; I didn't want to keep my breakfast anyway." He joked, piling on what food he wanted for his breakfast. Hannah flushed and Neville scowled playfully,

"Two words mate; Pansy Parkinson." He replied smugly. Harry's face twisted in distaste and he pushed the plate away again,

"And just like that, I'm not hungry anymore." He commented, tapping the side of his cup to have it filled with orange juice. Hannah made a face,

"I've never understood why you like that stuff." She muttered quietly, trying not to let her disgust at the orange juice show on her face. Harry chuckled and took a sip,

"And I've never understood why pumpkin juice is seen as normal." He shot back playfully. Neville rolled his eyes,

"It's not to be honest. It's just traditional to drink it at Hogwarts." He commented, taking one of Hannah's hands in his as he went to take a sip of the afore mentioned pumpkin juice. Hannah coloured slightly and Harry chuckled to himself,

"So when are the two of you going to stop dancing around the issue and start dating?" he asked, only half joking. This made Neville go red in the face as several of the Hufflepuffs seated around them turned to watch the conversation. Hannah, blushing furiously now, smirked as she thought of something,

"Oh and when are you going to choose a girl?" she shot back, earning herself a wide-eyed Harry, which encouraged her to continue, "You can't have both Susan and Daphne. Your heart may be big enough but I doubt you could keep up with two of them!"

Harry smirked as the Hufflepuffs around them laughed at his expense,

"Oh really? Trust me when I tell you this Hannah..." he pointed to the Rune of Body and Mind, hidden though it was by his school robes, "It doesn't just give me regular energy in spades."

A purr behind his ear let Harry know why exactly Hannah had been smiling quite so much,

"Mmm... now that sounds promising, Harry..." Susan Bones purred into his ear, breathing lightly on his neck, "I hope you live up to the hype..."

Harry swallowed,

"Good morning to you as well Sue." He replied, trying hard to keep his tone even and measured. Susan smirked and sat down beside him,

"Morning." She greeted brightly, causing most of the surrounding Hufflepuffs to laugh a little. Of course, several of the Hufflepuff boys were now giving Harry dirty looks. Between Harry and Neville, the most beautiful Hufflepuff girls had been taken. Neville chuckled,

"Now that's a morning greeting." He turned to Hannah with a smirk, "How come I only get a wave?"

Hannah smacked him on the arm,

"You're lucky you get that." She shot back, equally as teasing. Harry rolled his eyes and went to reach into his school bag for his schedule, not having memorised it yet. Susan frowned,

"Why aren't you eating Harry?" she looked concerned, "Is it... is it because you can't use a knife and a fork... since yesterday?"

Harry looked up, surprised,

"Oh what? Oh no, no." he threw Neville a dirty look, "Longbottom of Longbottom over there ruined my appetite with a very unsavoury remark."

Neville grinned, proud of himself,

"I do try to please." He replied before growing serious, "On a more serious note... is everything ready for Operation Bird-Takes-Weasel?"

The hyphenated 'operation' had been born after both Professors Snape and Dumbledore had left Harry, Neville, Susan and Daphne alone in the hospital wing after the confrontation with the Weasleys. Of course, most of the plan had come from the fiery displeasure of Susan and the cold ruthlessness of Daphne. Harry had had just enough input to make it clear that he didn't want to kill Ron, his declaration of a Blood Feud having been made mostly due to physical shock and lack of blood, but that he wasn't too fussed if Snape died. From that point on Susan and Daphne had argued and debated the plan for hours until the plan had been hammered out

entirely. Oh and Madam Pomfrey had thrown them out of the hospital wing, that put a quick end to the planning session. But Hannah had not been present and was understandably confused,

"Operation what takes what?" she demanded, her curiosity now peaked. Harry, now serious as well, dropped a small privacy ward over the four of them,

"It's Susan and Daphne's plan to make sure that I get rev- I mean, justice." He told her, smirking a little as his intended slip. Susan, her face as mask of restrained anger, shot him a glare,

"This is nothing to joke about Harry. The old man has gone too far with this! Letting the Weasel and the Death Eater get away with is nothing short of criminal!" she raged, showing her obvious passion for the subject. Harry raised his hands in surrender,

"Peace. I never said that it wasn't needed or appreciated." He reassured her, making her calm down just a little bit. Hannah frowned,

"Is this about the punishment that Weasley's supposed to be getting? There's been a rumour flying around that he's only got detention." She scoffed, sure that the detentions had been a rumour. When Susan grew angrier and both boys tensed, her mouth dropped, "You're joking. Detention? He exploded Harry's arm off with a Dark Arts spell! How in Merlin's name could Dumbledore only give him detention?"

Neville shrugged,

"He's trying to use the whole 'everyone deserves a second chance' line but no one's buying it. Hell, half the Weasley family has sided with Harry on this." He told her, squeezing her hand reassuringly. Hannah calmed a little before she thought of something,

"Hang on... what about your arm? I know that if the limb is destroyed by Dark magic then it can't be regrown but why didn't it get reattached?" she asked. At this question, both Neville and Susan grew angrier while Harry merely looked indifferent. Susan was almost breaking the table; her grip was so tight,

"That greasy haired bastard Vanished it during the duel! Blamed it on reflexes and it being a non-rubble duel!" she raged loudly, making Harry thankful that he'd thought to put a privacy spell up. Hannah paled,

"Snape Vanished his arm? He Vanished it? As in, broke it done into small components with magic and didn't let it reassemble?" she asked, building up into a rage like her best friend. Harry put a calming hand on Susan's shoulder,

"Both of you need to calm down." He told them, giving both Susan and Hannah pointed looks, "The plan will ensure that they get theirs. But we need to be more calm and collected if we're going to go through with it without a hitch."

Susan relaxed slightly into his warm touch and Hannah sighed, moving closer to Neville as he put an arm around her shoulders,

"Promise me that they'll pay for what they did..." she murmured, almost burrowing herself into Neville's side, much to the boy's embarrassed delight. Harry smiled slightly,

"I promise."

Lunch was a much tenser affair for Harry than breakfast had been. This time he and Neville had decided to visit the Slytherin table for their meal. Sat across the table from them were Daphne and Tracey, giggling almost silently to each other about the discomfort of the boys sat across from them. Neville frowned,

"How is this funny?" he hissed, leaning across the table in a further effort not to be heard, "It feels like they're trying to kill us with their eyes!"

This caused Tracey and Daphne to giggle slightly louder. Harry rolled his eyes at the display, they were trying to giggle quietly when they'd just seen him put up a privacy spell. He sighed a little as he looked up and down the length of the Slytherin table, noting all of the hateful glares from the boys and the half-concealed appraising looks of the girls. He chuckled lightly to himself.

Chicks dig limb loss.

Or was it scars? He could never remember. Daphne poked him in the shoulder, breaking him out of his daze,

"Huh? Oh, sorry. What were we talking about?" he asked with a weak smile. Tracey rolled her eyes,

"Honestly Potter... can you at least try to pay attention?" she drawled casually. Harry smirked,

"Honestly Davis... could you try any harder to sound like Snape?" he shot back in the same drawl. Tracey went red in the face,

"I am not like Professor Snape!" she snapped back, "That insufferable pig of a man deserves to die a painful death for what he did before he came here! I still can't believe that Dumbledore let a Death Eater teach here..."

Neville sat back with a sigh,

"Well believe it. After all..." he smirked, "It's all for the 'Greater Good'. Always remember the capital letters kids."

Daphne rolled her eyes,

"Oh do shut up Neville. You'll miss the fireworks after all." She commented with a vicious smirk. Harry turned round in his seat just as the doors to the Great Hall flew open, letting Amelia Bones and twenty Aurors in. Gasps resounded throughout the hall as the stormy-faced Madam Bones led her blue-clad Aurors between the Gryffindor and Ravenclaw tables. Professor Dumbledore stood up imperiously,

"What is the meaning of this?" he demanded, his voice thundering through the large hall easily. Amelia gestured and stopped, the Aurors halting behind her,

"Headmaster Dumbledore, I have here three arrest warrants." She declared loudly, matching the Headmaster's level of volume to be heard over the excited chattering of the general student body. She pulled three scrolls of parchment from her robes, "I have signed arrest warrants for one Ronald Billus Weasley..."

At this, Ron shot up out of his seat with an angry red face,

"But I was already punished by the Headmaster! He said I wouldn't have to worry about this anymore!" he shouted at the witch, apparently not caring that she was more powerful magically and politically than he would ever be. Dumbledore visibly flinched at the red-head's words, so damaging were they to his already damaged public image. Amelia turned to regard Dumbledore with anger burning behind her eyes,

"Did he now?" she asked thinly before nodding to the closet Aurors, "Regardless, you will be escorted to the Ministry of Magic to await your trial by the Wizengamot."

The colour left Ron's face immediately as two Aurors walked slowly towards him. He panicked, drawing his wand clumsily. A flick of the wrist from the lead Auror and the student had ropes binding his hands and legs, his discarded wand already being summoned away from him. Amelia opened one of the scrolls as the bound Weasley was levitated away from the Gryffindor table,

"Ronald Billus Weasley, you are under arrest for the use of a Dark Arts spell, with malicious intent, and attempted murder of the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House. You do not have to say anything; however it may harm your defence if you fail to mention something which you later rely on in court." She rattled off before nodding her head again. The two Aurors nodded and marched from the room, Ron Weasley floating behind them while shouting repeatedly that he was innocent. A few seconds later, one of the Aurors had stunned the struggling youth to speed up transport. Madam Bones turned back to the staff table, looking at the Potions Professor, "Severus Snape, you are likewise under arrest."

Snape stood up from his seat, sneering at the two Aurors that had been moving to take him,

"I can still walk by myself." He turned to the Slytherin table with a smirk, "I'll be back before dinner, behave like true Slytherins while I am absent."

Madam Bones narrowed her eyes,

"You won't be back here at all if even one of your charges stick." She cleared her throat, opening another of the scrolls, "Severus

Snape, you are charged with wilful misconduct as a Witness for a duel involving one of the Most Ancient and Noble Houses, the indirect and wilful dismemberment of the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House as well as a breach of your life debt to the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter."

Snape's sneer turned into a scowl and he sent Harry a particularly hateful glare,

"Trying to get me arrested on trumped up charges Potter? Just as arrogant as your father I see." He sneered, still trying to sound superior. Harry scowled right back and stood up from the Slytherin table,

"Madam Bones, I would like you to add 'Slander of a Most Ancient and Noble House' to the charges." He told the head of the DMLE firmly. Madam Bones nodded,

"It will be so. Aurors Shacklebolt and Dawlish. Take Mr Snape to his ministry holding cell." She commanded. Immediately, both Aurors moved up to Snape and took his wand away from him before binding his hands together in magical rope. As his potions professor was led out of the Great Hall, Albus Dumbledore stepped forwards,

"Madam Bones, I trust that you will not be taking any more of my staff?" he asked, trying with all of his significant willpower to remain the friendly grandfather figure. Amelia smiled, a vicious and predatory expression,

"After this, yes." She drew herself up to her full height, "Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, you are under arrest for interference in a duel involving the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House and for attempting to disrupt the path of justice on two counts."

Dumbledore's eyes widened dramatically as the remaining Aurors cautiously began to approach him, wands at the ready. Quickly scanning the staff table, he found that none of the staff looked willing to rise to his defence. He sighed and slowly, so as to avoid being stunned by a nervous Auror, gave his wand to McGonagall,

"For safe keeping my dear." He told her gently before walking around the staff table and allowing himself to be bound at the wrists

and led out of the Great Hall. Once the headmaster had been led out, Amelia Bones made her way over to the Slytherin table,

"Lord Potter." She greeted him sternly as she approached. More whispers broke out around the hall, many of them obviously thinking that Harry was going to be arrested as well. Draco Malfoy, in an almost Weasley level of stupidity, spoke up loudly,

"It's about time that someone took Scarhead away!" he called out loudly, causing some of his regular minions to laugh uproariously. Amelia Bones snapped her head up to glare at the outspoken Slytherin boy,

"You will show the proper respect to the Head of a Most Ancient and Noble House or I will have you arrested for slander of said house." Her gaze bore into Draco's as he tried to make himself as small as possible, "Do I make myself clear?"

Draco, not trusting his voice after being so thoroughly damned, silently nodded. Harry smiled a little at Madam Bones,

"I'm guessing that you will need me present for the trials?" he asked her, making her finally drop the glare she'd been giving Draco,

"Yes Lord Potter. Requests have also been made, by their Heads of House, for Miss Daphne Greengrass, Miss Susan Bones and Mr Neville Longbottom to accompany you." She lied smoothly. Of course Amelia was one of the very few people who knew that all four of the teenagers were the heads of their own families and were required as members of the Seven. He bowed slightly,

"We will, of course, follow you to attend." He informed her as Daphne and Neville stood up from the table to join them. With a nod from Amelia, Susan joined the group as they left a thoroughly shocked student body in the Great Hall, two professors less and their lunches forgotten in their gossip.

Daphne tutted at Harry again as he fidgeted once again in his purple Wizengamot robes, the golden collar around his neck signifying his position as one of the Seven. Of course, it was said golden collar which was causing him to fidget. She sighed a little before pulling Harry's prying fingers away from the status symbol,

"I know it's constricting... but you need to show them the Lordly side of you, not the real side of you. The Lordly side will be fine in the court, the real side probably won't." she reminded him, smoothing out his flowing robes gently. Harry took a deep breath and looked around the empty Chamber of the Seven. The high-backed chairs were all unoccupied, with Daphne and him standing in the middle of the Chamber and the other members nowhere in sight,

"Where are Neville and Susan?" he asked, frowning slightly at their absence. Daphne smirked playfully and hit him on the arm,

"Why Lord Potter... a girl could start to think you didn't like her like that." She scolded playfully. Harry smirked right back,

"Well, said girl would be rather silly to assume that I didn't like her." He replied, noting the slight reddening of her cheeks. Daphne's eyes narrowed when she saw his small grin and she hit him in the arm again, harder this time,

"Prat." She spat with the beginnings of a smile. Harry, wincing a little, hopped from one leg to another,

"You know... it's at times like this that I could do with another arm..." he smirked at her now horrified face, "Just to rub the other one while looking sheepish of course."

Daphne hit him again, repeatedly, before falling forward onto him, her face buried in his chest. Harry frowned when felt her shuddering against him. He raised her head to look him in the eye and saw the angry tears there,

"Don't you dare joke like that again!" she told him tearfully. At his dumb nod she continued, "It's hard for me to see you like this Harry... I don't like to think about what that... that... bastard! What that bastard of a Weasley did to you!"

Harry gently cupped the side of her face, whipping at her tears with his thumb, smiling down gently at her,

"Don't worry Daphne... it's not a problem. I've told you before; I just need to stay without one for just a little while longer." His smile wilted a little, "For me."

Daphne's face scrunched up and she balled some of his Wizengamot robes up in her hand in her frustration,

"Why Harry? Why do you have to put yourself through this?" she demanded, her tears coming back angrier than the last time. Harry frowned, his face setting,

"I have to drive the lesson home Daphne. I have to feel the ache of loss with my whole body before I can continue down the path I am on." He told her firmly. Daphne shook her head, batting her fists against his chest,

"Fuck your path! I want you whole again god-damn it!" she cried out, bunching his robes up in her fists again as she rested her head against his chest again. Harry sighed a little, running his fingers lightly through her hair,

"I'm a warrior now Daph..." he felt her look up at him at the use of the nickname, this being the first time he'd used it, "And I can't afford to make mistakes in battle. I'm staying like this until dinner because I need to feel some of the pain of loss. Because next time..."

He looked deep into her eyes,

"Next time it could be something more important."

"The following is a trio of trials, before the whole Wizengamot, brought forward by Lord Harry James Potter of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter, one of the illustrious Seven. Madam Amelia Bones presiding judge, with Minister Fudge as acting Chief Warlock of the Wizengamot." The court scribe, one Percy Weasley, read out loudly so that every member of the Wizengamot could hear. He turned to the side of the courtroom, where the three defendants were sat, waiting and chained, to a bench, "The defendants are; Albus Percival Wulfric Brian Dumbledore, Ronald Billus Weasley and Severus Snape. Between the defendants we have two counts of disrupting the course of justice; one count of interfering in an honour duel involving one of the Most Ancient and Noble Houses; one count of wilful misconduct as a Witness to an honour duel involving one of the Most Ancient and Noble Houses; one count of indirect and wilful dismemberment of the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House; one count of acting against an active life debt; one count of a Class

2 Dark Arts spell used with malicious intent; and one count of attempted murder of the head of a Most Ancient and Noble House."

Minister Fudge banged his gavel almost gleefully, ready to see Dumbledore go down in flames on criminal charges, and his 'ridiculous' story with him,

"The Wizengamot is ready to hear the evidence presented." He announced, a little too much of his happiness bleeding out into his tone of voice. Madam Bones nodded slowly,

"The judge of their joint cases is ready to hear the evidence presented." She declared firmly, her face a mask of steely resolve. Percy nodded absently as he looked down the scroll,

"Prosecutor was initially filed to be one Lord Harry James Potter, of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter, but was withdrawn due to a conflict of interest." He looked up from the scroll of parchment again, "Prosecutor for their cases shall be Lord Longbottom of Longbottom. Defendant Ronald Billus Weasley has refused his right for legal representation by attempting to resist arrest. Defendants Snape and Dumbledore have declined legal representation to represent themselves. First case; the case of Lord Harry James Potter against Ronald Billus Weasley. The defendant will take The Chair."

Ron was unshackled from the bench but didn't seem willing to move, his eyes fixed on the Chained Chair in the centre of the dungeon-like courtroom. After a few seconds the closest Auror, Auror Dawlish, grabbed Ron by the upper arm and half-dragged him across the room to throw him bodily into The Chair. The teenage wizard tried to twist away from The Chair but the magical chains quickly wrapped themselves around his limbs, binding him to The Chair, and pulled them back in. Dawlish shook his head in disgust as Ron began to mumble and writhe in The Chair in obvious discomfort. Madam Bones glared down at the defendant,

"The Prosecutor, Longbottom of Longbottom, may approach." Neville moved closer to the centre of the courtroom, setting a small folder down on the scribe's table. At his nod, Amelia pointed to Ron, who was still struggling valiantly, "You may begin with your case."

Neville nodded respectfully before walking in front of Ron, his back still to the struggling boy, as he began to address the Wizengamot,

"Lords and Ladies of the Wizengamot, before you sits one of the most insidious creatures known to man... a person who was willing to go against the established rules of an honour duel." He turned suddenly, pointing at Ron contemptuously, "Look at him! He writhes around and struggles to escape from his crimes like the honourless coward that he is!"

There was a general murmur of agreement from many members of the Wizengamot, accompanied by much head nodding or shaking. Ron pushed against the chains especially hard,

"No! I only did what I had to do!" he pleaded before the chains clamped down and slammed him back into the wood of The Chair again. Neville gestured at Ron again,

"You see? Even now he flaunts our ways and our laws! He resisted arrest, poorly, but he did resist. His resistance forfeits his right to legal defence and yet he sits there and pleads that what he did was the 'right thing'." He shook his head in a show of disgust, "Has there ever been a non-lethal honour duel where the use of a Class 2 Dark Arts spell has been justified? The answer is no! A Class 2 Dark Arts spell is a lethal spell and is punishable by a total of no less than thirty years in Azkaban!"

Ron squirmed even harder in The Chair,

"No! You can't send me to Azkaban! He was going dark! I swear it!" he pleaded, fighting hard against the efforts of The Chair to restrain him again. His eyes locked onto his brother, "Percy! Please! I'm your brother! Don't let them throw me in Azkaban! Please!"

"SILENCE!" Percy thundered, taking much of the court by surprise with the sheer volume of his voice. Of course, he was the son of the infamous Molly Weasley, "You have brought disgrace to yourself and the family name! The only reason that Lord Potter has not killed you to satisfy the blood feud is that he has graciously seen Azkaban as enough of a punishment."

Ron still struggled,

"But I'm your brother!" he cried, wailing as he fought the chains. Percy's face grew almost as red as Ron could make his own,

"You are no brother of mine!" he roared, reminding the older members of the court of a younger Barty Crouch Sr. and just like with the elder Crouch, his word was the general view of many members of the Wizengamot. Various shouts rang out from the members in support of Percy Weasley's statement, causing Ron to break down and start sobbing as he was pinned to The Chair once again. Madam Bones banged her gavel several times,

"Order! Order in the courtroom!" she declared, her voice amplified by the magical gavel, "The Wizengamot will now vote on the proposed punishment for both crimes as a thirty year imprisonment in Azkaban!"

A silencing ward sprang up around the upper levels, cutting the courtroom floor off from the members of the Wizengamot while they votes. For a few moments, only Ron's sobs could be heard on the courtroom floor. The wards dropped and silence resumed, everyone on the lower level holding their breath. Minister Fudge stood up, looking very self-important,

"We, the esteemed members of the Wizengamot, find the defendant, one Ronald Billus Weasley... guilty of all charges." He declared, causing Ron to let out a desperate wail and Dumbledore to sadly shake his head. Fudge continued; a cruel smile in place now, "The defendant is sentenced to an increased sentence of forty years in Azkaban prison. Effective immediately."

Aurors Dawlish and Shacklebolt moved from the sides of the courtroom floor to remove Ron from The Chair. Picking the boy up by his upper arms, the Aurors began to drag him out of the courtroom as he kicked and screamed,

"Percy! Percy, help me! I'm your brother Percy!" he screamed and wailed. Percy Weasley showed no indication of hearing the pleas, which were silenced and the courtroom doors slammed shut. As the members of the court shuffled their papers, changing their information of the first case for their information for the next, two nondescript Aurors unshackled Severus Snape and escorted him to the Chained Chair. A very visible shudder ran through Snape's body at drawing close to The Chair and he became, if it was possible, a

shade whiter than he already was. The Aurors pushed him slightly and he sat down heavily in The Chair, swallowing hard when the chains jumped to life and bound him to the unforgiving wood of The Chair. Percy Weasley stood, professionally detached from his brother's earlier trial,

"The trial of Severus Snape. Mr Snape is charged with one count of indirectly and wilfully dismembering the Head of a Most Ancient and Noble House; one count of misconduct as a Witness to an honour duel involving said Head of Most Ancient and Noble House and one count of acting against an active life debt." He read out the charges before sitting again to begin work as the scribe. Madam Bones banged her gavel to get the attention of the whole courtroom,

"You have been read your charges." She eyed him with just a hint of malice, "How do you plead?"

Snape swallowed to clear his throat,

"Not guilty." He managed to mutter in a poor attempt at his usual drawl. The Chair had that effect on Death Eaters, 'reformed' though they may be. Madam Bones' eyes narrowed slightly but she continued,

"Lord Longbottom of Longbottom, you may proceed." She told the teenage Lord. Neville nodded tightly before retrieving a sheet of parchment from his file, still resting on Percy's table,

"Mr Snape... I have here a Ministry record which states that your life was saved by one James Charles Potter." He pretended to read it over again, "Harry James Potter's father saved your life. Is that correct?"

Snape had gritted his teeth throughout Neville's opening statement and it seemed to take a great deal of effort for him to open his mouth again to reply,

"Yes." He muttered; his voice barely above a hiss. Enchantments on the Chained Chair amplified the hiss so that it could be heard by the whole Wizengamot. Neville nodded slowly,

"And do you know the price for wilfully going against an active life debt, even if it has been passed down from Father to Son?" he

asked, pacing up and down in front of his restrained Potions Professor. Snape gritted his teeth yet again,

"Yes." He ground out hatefully. Neville frowned, feigning surprise,

"So you knew that acting as you did, to harm Lord Potter-" he began but was cut off,

"Objection!" Snape shouted out, "The incident in question was down to reflexes alone and not due to any malicious intent!"

Neville gave him a condescending look,

"Really? Are you trying to tell the court that you hold no malice towards Lord Potter for his parentage?" he asked with a sad shake of his head, "Please, evidence of your hatred for Lord Potter has been witnessed in each and every one of your interactions with him. Care to dispute that when the court reserves the right to use Veritaserum?"

Snape ground his teeth together,

"No." he ground out eventually. Neville nodded,

"So we have established that you have a history of hating Lord Potter." He commented, continuing at Snape's brief nod, "And you expect us to believe that you Vanished his arm, thereby permanently dismembering him, purely accidentally?"

Snape scowled darkly,

"As I have previously stated, Longbottom, I acted out of reflex alone in a non-rubble honour duel. I am innocent of any wrong-doing." He protested scornfully. Neville chuckled lightly,

"Oh of course." He picked a small vial of clear liquid up off of the scribe's desk, "Care to take a drink and let me repeat the question?"

"Objection! Prosecutor is badgering the witness!" Dumbledore called out from the bench at the side of the courtroom floor. The members of the Wizengamot began to mutter amongst themselves at his intervention when Fudge banged his gavel several times to gain silence,

"Silence! Albus Dumbledore, you are not the defence for the defendant and so you will keep your objections to yourself!" he called out with a cruel glint to his eyes. Snape slumped in The Chair as he noticed the staring contest going on between Fudge and Dumbledore. It was now obvious that he was going to be railroaded in this trial; just to get it over with so that Fudge could get to Dumbledore's trial. An aide quickly stalked amongst the members of the Wizengamot to stand beside Minister Fudge. The Minister leant closer and the aide whispered something into his ear before passing him a note. Fudge looked annoyed for a second before banging his gavel once again, "This body has heard enough. We shall deliberate and give our judgement. Afterwards we will have a brief recess before the trial of Albus Dumbledore."

The privacy wards went up again, separating the courtroom floor from the debating Wizengamot. Neville walked over to Percy's desk, tapping his file to get the man to stop writing and look up at him,

"How are you holding up Percy?" he asked quietly, genuinely concerned, "I know that it can't have been easy to say those things to your own brother."

Percy's business-like appearance faltered for a second before it was back in full force,

"There are certain members of my family that I have missed since our... falling out, but I will admit that Ronald was not one of them." He bowed his head a little to resume writing, "Terrible as that may sound, it has not affected my performance today. He deserves his punishment, his actions have shamed the family name. Essentially meaning that any Weasley trying to enter the ministry in the future will have less opportunities because of him."

Neville wanted to roll his eyes, the same old Percy. Still trying so hard to be professional instead of human, in the hopes of outgrowing the stigma of his family name by making his own in the ministry. Instead of rolling his eyes, he nodded respectfully,

"I understand." He told the older man before smiling faintly, "What does a guy have to do to get a cup of coffee around here anyway?"

Percy frowned a little but nodded slowly,

"An elf named Timmy brings coffee to those who ask for it." He replied before completely submerging himself back in his duties as scribe. Neville stepped away from the table, idly wandering around the courtroom floor,

"Timmy!" he called out. A House Elf, dressed in a plain black strip of silk, popped into existence beside Neville's knee,

"Honoured one be calling Timmy?" the small creature asked with a mix of fear and respect. Neville nodded,

"A cup of coffee please. White, two sugars." He told the elf before resuming his idle wandering as the elf popped away. Timmy popped back a few seconds later, a steaming cup of coffee waiting. Neville smiled a little as he took the cup, "Thank you Timmy."

The House Elf nodded briskly, his ears flopping from side to side, before popping out of the courtroom again. Just as Neville was about to take a sip, Snape pulled against the chains, getting his attention,

"They won't convict me and you know it Longbottom!" he snarled, in what Neville saw as more of an attempt to convince himself. Neville shrugged,

"Probably not." He agreed before smirking, "Though I seriously doubt that Fudge will let you just walk away."

Snape sneered hatefully,

"I have protection from being sent to Azkaban and am one of the few potions masters qualified to teach at Hogwarts." He said, attempting to drawl it out as he usually did. Of course, the noise sounded strange when the context was that he was in The Chair and was about to have judgement passed on him. Neville smirked,

"Are you so sure?" at the professor's self-assured sneer he continued, "After all, those protections were put in place by Albus Dumbledore. And who is the Ministry trying very hard to discredit in every conceivable way...? Oh! That'll be Albus Dumbledore."

Snape's eyes had widened at this but the look of utter dismay was soon replaced by another hateful sneer,

"I don't need Albus Dumbledore to fight my battles for me." He spat out venomously. Neville looked up as the privacy wards fell,

"We'll see Snape... we'll see..." Neville muttered, just low enough for Snape to hear it. Fudge opened by banging his gavel several times, to stop the impending argument between Neville and Snape,

"The accused has been found not guilty of the charge of going against an active life debt, as the life debt has not triggered any adverse effects on the accused." Fudge read out from the parchment in front of him, causing Snape to smirk victoriously at Neville, who simply nodded towards Fudge again,

"The accused is found guilty of indirectly and wilfully dismembering the Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter and misconduct as an official Witness in a duel involving the Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter." He read out, his attention focused solely on how Dumbledore was taking the news. Snape's face contorted into a mask of fury as Neville smiled slightly to himself. Madam Bones picked up from where Fudge had left off,

"This body has decided to be lenient due to the shortage of capable potions masters/mistresses in the country at the moment and your obvious skill in the area." She announced, almost bringing the smirk back to Snape's face, before she continued, "Therefore this body has decided that Mr Snape will pay the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter reparations up to, and including, 200,000 galleons and that he be removed from his position of Head of Slytherin House along with his teaching position at Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, pending an investigation into his teaching abilities."

Snape pulled against the chains of The Chair,

"This is outrageous! All of this for some attention seeking brat of a child?" he roared as the two Aurors from before began to unchain him from The Chair, "My vault doesn't even contain that much money!"

Madam Bones narrowed her eyes into deadly slits, even as the members of the Wizengamot were leaving,

"Then it will be taken in property. Consider yourself lucky that I am still not allowed to fully charge you... Death Eater." She threatened, her voice cold as she spat out the phrase 'Death Eater' as if it were some curse. Snape calmed slightly as he was led away by the Aurors, who was most likely going to be taking him to Gringotts to see to about transferring the funds and assets. Neville smiled a little before turning to look over at the benches. He frowned when Dumbledore smiled back at him, the twinkling back in his eyes. Neville left the courtroom floor with barely restrained rage at not seeing it earlier. The note the aide had brought had been from Dumbledore, probably agreeing to give Fudge something for the cases against him to either be dropped or punished only as they had agreed beforehand.

The old man had played on the corruption of the Fudge administration, as Neville and Harry had done in the planning of Operation Bird-Takes-Weasel, and he'd managed to worm his way out of any real punishment.

"That god-damn son of a bitch!" Neville raged as he entered the Chamber of the Seven, making Harry look over his copy of the Daily Prophet (which had since stopped all slander against him and focused entirely on discrediting Dumbledore) at his angry friend,

"Inside voice Neville." He scolded with a light smile. Sat in the Greengrass seat, just to Harry's right, Daphne gave him a glare,

"I happen to think that his rage is justified." She commented stiffly, her frustration at their earlier confrontation is apparent. Harry sighed and folded up the newspaper,

"Come on guys... Dumbledore's been working these halls for how long?" he asked, throwing the question out. The door opened and Susan Bones entered,

"Around fifty years or so." She replied before sitting down in the seat reserved for the House of Bones. Neville stomped noisily over to his own seat before sitting down heavily. Harry nodded slowly, setting his newspaper aside,

"Around fifty years. I think that fifty years is long enough for anyone to become a master at weaselling themselves out of trouble." He commented, almost disinterested in the conversation. Neville frowned,

"How can you be so blasé about this? That man has wronged you and he's going to get away with it!" he stormed. Daphne's eyes suddenly brightened,

"No he's not." She announced suddenly, giving Harry a side long glance and a smirk, "Since when were you so Slytherin, Mr Potter?"

Harry chuckled,

"Since first year to be honest. The Sorting Hat nearly had a fit when it was trying to decide which house to put me in. Due to... outside influences, I begged it to go with Gryffindor instead of Slytherin. Shame really." He replied with a small smile, thankful that Daphne wasn't beyond letting her earlier anger go. Susan smirked a little,

"I get it." She announced just as suddenly, before grinning widely, "Dumbledore will have a fit."

Neville, finally fed up of being out of the loop, growled in frustration,

"And what is it that everyone gets?" he ground out. Harry smiled reassuringly,

"Don't worry mate. If I hadn't been sat on the Seven's balcony with these two little political geniuses then I wouldn't have thought of it." He replied, absently noting that both girls were beaming at the praise, "The Seven are above the Wizengamot... meaning that we can 'amend' their punishments."

Neville, finally catching on, hit his face with his palm,

"My god... it's so simple that Gran would kill me for forgetting about it!" he cried out before pulling his head back to reveal his smirk, "I assume that by 'amend' you mean to render the original punishments FUBAR?"

Harry grinned wide and nodded, causing Neville to grin widely in response. Daphne and Susan shared confused looks before Susan spoke up,

"What does FUBAR mean?" she asked tentatively. Both boys grinned wider and answered in unison,

"Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition!"

"This body of the Wizengamot finds the accused, Albus Dumbledore, guilty of interfering in an honour duel involving the Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter, Lord Harry James." Fudge read out pompously as Dumbledore sat serenely in The Chair, "This body has agreed that Mr Dumbledore shall be removed from his position as the Headmaster of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, to be replaced by Undersecretary to the Minister Dolores Umbridge, and his Order of Merlin revoked."

As Madam Bones was about to declare her acceptance of this judgement, the parchment burned away quickly for no apparent reason. Minister Fudge looked shocked and outraged at the same time, leading many of the Aurors in the courtroom to begin searching for a person in a position to burn the parchment with a spell. Madam Bones was about to speak when another sheet of parchment materialised in front of her from a blaze of flames. The sheet of parchment stayed suspended in the air and many in the courtroom recognised it as the same way that a howler was suspended in the air as it delivered its message. Just as a regular howler, this piece of parchment twisted itself and formed a mouth,

"THIS IS THE WORD OF THE SEVEN!" boomed a deep, throaty, voice from the enchanted paper. Many of the Wizengamot members began to mutter about this new development while Fudge was wildly banging his gavel for silence. The modified howler continued, at a much more conversational level this time, "Six members of the Seven have found the punishments agreed upon by this body as inadequate. By the right of the Seven, these punishments have been overruled and replaced."

Several of the more outspoken members of the Wizengamot stood up and started to declare their outrage at being overruled by a body that they had largely over-looked in the past. The wiser of the members stayed completely silent, aware that the legitimacy of the

Seven had been assured since the time of Arthur while the Wizengamot had only been formed by the Seven in the 1400s. One of the ever-shaded members of the Seven stood from the blacked-out seats of the private balcony. The entire assembly turned to watch as the unclear figure moved to the edge of the balcony,

"Enough." Came the softly spoken command, issued in the same deep and throaty voice as the howler. Although the voice was not loud, the word echoed throughout the courtroom and the outspoken members of the Wizengamot wisely sat back down, now happy to keep their opinions to themselves. The figure, completely anonymous thanks to the incredibly powerful privacy wards on the balcony, seemed to look across all of the assembled members of the Wizengamot before nodding once and sitting back down. The howler, seemingly aware of its creator's little speech, continued,

"The new punishments are as follows; 50,000 galleons shall be paid in reparations to St. Mugos' Permanent Spell Damage ward at the request of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter; Albus Dumbledore shall be demoted to co-headteacher of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry with Madam Umbridge acting as the other co-headteacher; A restraining order is to be placed on Albus Dumbledore, preventing him from directly interacting with the Head of the Most Ancient and Noble House of Potter. Failure to adhere to any of these rulings shall result in a further 250,000 galleon fine. So is the word of the Seven!" the howler declared before crumpling inwards and bursting into flames. The prosecutor, one Neville Longbottom, clapped his hands gleefully to get the attention of the flabbergasted Minister Fudge,

"Well then... that about wraps it up doesn't it?" he asked with a large smile. The Chair released Dumbledore and the normally peaceful man stood up with more than a little anger present,

"I demand a re-trial!" he declared fiercely, apparently he'd sunk a lot of money into making that deal with Fudge. The Minister sneered a little, he'd won both the attempt to smear his 'enemy's' reputation and snag some of Dumbledore's gold because of the intervention of the Seven,

"Request is denied." The Minister proclaimed gleefully. Dumbledore frowned once before sweeping from the courtroom in a stream of multi-coloured robes. Neville Longbottom grinned up at the Minister,

"Would it be possible for me and my school mates to get a portkey to Hogsmeade? It appears that we'll be just in time for dinner."

Harry gritted his teeth against the almost unbearable pain of the specially treated basilisk venom burning the runes into his flesh. The stump of his left arm was bare, the sleeve of his robe and the sleeve of his shirt having been cut off, and a very uncertain Neville Longbottom was delicately painting the runic symbols onto the pale and uneven skin of his friend. In a stroke of genius, that meant that Harry didn't need to be strapped into a variant of The Chair, Susan had immobilised his entire body from the neck downwards. Susan and Daphne had wanted to numb the stump of his left arm but Harry had stopped them, knowing that the ritual required the person to endure the pain of the symbols in order for the magic to work. Apparently his grandmother had been well informed of the Potter tendency to work despite intense pain. Neville stopped, pulling the brush away delicately, careful not to let any of the altered venom drop,

"I'm finished." He declared quietly. Harry, who's closed his eyes half way through, looked around the unused classroom and couldn't spot either Susan or Daphne anywhere. He turned his head to look at Neville,

"Where are the girls?" he asked, his voice hoarse from his now sore throat. Neville frowned a little,

"Did you really expect them to stand and watch you go through that?" he asked, genuinely curious. Harry nodded his head grudgingly,

"Not really." He answered, looking down at his stump. The pale skin was now almost entirely covered in black runic symbols, all of them flowing lines which joined and connected with each other in their various patterns. He smiled, "Good job Nev. I don't think Borgin could have done half as good a job."

Neville shrugged,

"Don't worry about it. Although I'm worried I didn't do it right..." he muttered, "Didn't the book say that the regeneration of the limb would be immediate?"

Harry smirked lightly,

"No, it said that the limb would regenerate at the command of the person." He chuckled, "Let's just say that I'm going to put a lot of people off of their dinner."

Neville chuckled a little to himself, cancelling the immobilisation charm on Harry's body with a flick of his wand,

"You really are a prankster at heart." He noted dryly as Harry stood up stiffly from the regular wooden chair. Harry shrugged,

"Runs in my family." He replied with a secret smile before walking over to the door, opening it to find two very nervous girls waiting just outside, "Don't worry... I can regrow it on command now."

Daphne, who was wringing a part of her robes in her hands, frowned,

"Then why haven't you already done it?" she asked, her regular 'Ice Queen' mask long forgotten. Well, forgotten when Harry was around anyway. Susan, who had been pacing up and down until the door opened, frowned a little,

"Why do I get the feeling that I'm not going to be feeling up for dinner?" she asked, her eyes narrowed slightly in suspicion. Harry grinned,

"Oh I'm just going to wave to the Headmaster before dinner, like I promised." He replied innocently as he began to make his way to the Great Hall. Susan's frown deepened,

"Why am I not reassured by that statement?" she probed, trying to figure out how far Harry was going to take this. Daphne clamped down on her emotions and assumed the 'Ice Queen Mask' as Harry ignored Susan's question in favour of sweeping into the filled Great Hall with his arm and his stump both raised to point up at the enchanted ceiling,

"Headmaster Dumbledore!" he called up to the Staff table. Every head in the Great Hall turned to look at him, those closest gasped and began whispering about all of the strange lines drawn all along the stump of his left arm. Professor Dumbledore, who was now sat

next to an extremely pleased looking Umbridge, stood up graciously from his meal,

"Lord Potter... I take it you believe you've found a way to re-attach your arm?" he asked, the twinkle in his eye as it was widely known that Harry's arm could not be re-attached as it had been Vanished. Harry smirked,

"Of course Professor... I have succeeded!" he declared loudly, shocking most of the staff and assembled students into whispered conversations. Dumbledore just looked amused,

"Oh Lord Potter... I'm afraid that you must be misinformed. A limb severed by a Dark curse cannot be regrown through medical means." He countered in an almost happy tone of voice. Several of the other teachers sent the now co-headmaster some rather dirty looks for blatantly taunting a student's disability. Harry laughed a little,

"Then watch closely Professor Dumbledore..." he declared before closing his eyes tightly. Immediately, the black runic symbols running across his stump lit up bright yellow as his magic actively pulsed through it. Several of the closer students suddenly screamed as the end of the stump began to bubble; almost as if the pale skin were a boiling liquid mass. Harry concentrated harder and the bubbling and boiling of the skin increased, the rippling of the skin increasing tenfold in frequency. After a few seconds of this, Harry opened his eyes and grinned, the boiling of his skin having stopped. He raised his right hand and waved slowly at Professor Dumbledore before turning his body slightly to the right, so that his stump was pointed at Dumbledore. When nothing happened immediately, Dumbledore went to speak again but the what happened next caused the words to die in his throat.

A new arm, the skin a perfectly matching the tone of the rest of his body, literally exploded out of the stump. A fully grown arm, Harry's new muscles and all, was all but pushed out of his shoulder, the pointed hand spearing through the flesh of the stump and sending it flying in all directions. Finally the new arm was fully formed and fully aligned, pointing directly at Dumbledore's wide-eyed expression of shock as the remaining gore of the stump dripped and slide across the new skin of the limb. Mockingly slow, Harry waved at Dumbledore with his left hand, exaggerating the movement to show

that he had full motor skills with his new arm. He twirled his left arm in a simple circle before bowing deeply to Dumbledore,

"I believe I have won our discussion Headmaster! I have regrown my arm inside of a day and have waved at you at dinner to show you!" he declared proudly before simply moving to the side and sitting down at the nearby Hufflepuff table. A shell-shocked Susan and a slightly queasy Neville sat near him, a silently gaping Hannah Abbott sat across from them. Before Harry could begin to eat, the sugary voice of Umbridge carried across the hall to him,

"An extra two months of detention with me Potter! I will not have you exposing the children to Dark rituals!" she declared venomously, or as venomously as her sugary voice could be. Professor Dumbledore spoke up next,

"I do not believe that runes have ever been considered Dark when used in rituals." The headmaster stared intently at an apparently bored Harry, "You did use runes, did you not Harry?"

Harry shrugged happily,

"Family secret Professor Dumbledore." He answered. Dumbledore frowned but nodded, sitting back down in his seat and allowing the detentions to stand. Harry grinned back at his friends, all of whom were still struggling to cope with what had happened, "Seems like I get more time with Umbitch. Shame that."

"Enter!" came the sugary sweet call from the other side of the office door. Harry opened the door to Professor Umbridge's office, his smile from earlier still in place even as he reported for his first detention. Umbridge's eyes narrowed slightly at the sight of his smile before she too smiled, a malicious glint in her eyes, "You will be writing lines for me Mr Potter."

Harry shrugged, still on a high from the adrenaline rush the regrowth ritual had given him, and sat down at the other side of Umbridge's desk. He pulled a piece of parchment from his bag and bent to retrieve a quill and some ink when Umbridge stopped him,

"Oh no Mr Potter... you will be using one of my quills." She told him with a smile and the same glint in her eyes as before, "And this one doesn't require ink."

Harry shrugged and sat up straight. When he saw the dark red quill that he was expected to write with, he frowned and looked up at his new co-headmistress,

"I'm sorry Professor but this isn't a quill." He told her, fighting through the high of adrenaline to focus on the negative aspects of writing with the implement in front of him. The Professor's smile increased,

"Why of course it is a quill Mr Potter." she replied, before her smile fell a little, "You will write out 'I will respect my betters'. You may begin."

Harry picked up the dark red quill and began to turn it over in his hand as he inspected it more closely, his attention snapping back as the adrenaline high all but evaporated. He looked at her again, a harder edge to his eyes,

"You want me to write lines with this?" he asked her, his voice losing the carefree tone it had carried when he was still on the high. Umbridge's eyes darkened,

"Yes, Mr Potter. You will write lines with that quill." She told him, her smile quickly falling away. Harry's frown deepened,

"How many times?" he asked her, now certain that he knew what the instrument in his hand actually was. Umbridge's smile returned, apparently taking his question as the beginning of acceptance,

"Oh, until the message sinks in Mr Potter. Until the message sinks in." she replied with an edge to her sugary sweet voice which spoke of the ill-will she felt towards him. Harry's eyes narrowed dangerously,

"You want me to write lines with a Blood Quill?" he asked, now ignoring the subtle approach. Umbridge's eyes widened at this, obviously having thought that he would not know what the object truly was due to him being muggle-raised. She coughed a little,

"I'm not sure what you mean Mr Potter, that quill is merely self-inking." She lied cheerfully. Harry scowled,

"Don't lie to me." He told her, his voice harder and colder than she had ever heard it before, even when he'd almost killed the Ron with his bare hands. Umbridge's eyes narrowed in response, her nostrils flaring,

"I don't think I like your tone, Mr Potter. You are speaking to your co-headmistress!" she declared, the smile now replaced entirely with an ugly scowl which succeeded in making the woman even more physically repulsive. Harry held the quill between the middle and pointer fingers of his right hand for a few seconds, staring deep in Umbridge's piggy little eyes,

"And I don't like yours. You are speaking to the Head of a Most Ancient and Noble House, one of the Seven. Disrespect on this level is grounds for a fine." He nodded at the Blood Quill, "If you had assaulted me with this Dark Artefact then it would be grounds to see you in Azkaban."

Umbridge's face grew bright red and she stood up sharply from his seat,

"This is ridiculous! You are a liar and nothing more! You may have managed to trick the Minister and the rest of the Wizengamot into believing that you are the head of one of the Seven but I will not be so easily led astray!" she screeched, lunging across the table in an effort to grab the Blood Quill. Harry, with the reflexes of the great seeker that he was, moved his hand just in time to make Umbridge almost lose her balance in her attempt to grab the object. He stood up from his own chair and took a few steps back,

"You must respect your betters, Professor." He spat with disdain before snapping the Blood Quill in two with his fingers. Umbridge's eyes widened and her nostrils flared once again in anger,

"You insufferable little brat! You will pay for that!" she ranted, moving to draw her wand. She had almost reached it when she found that her body would no longer move. Her eyes, the only part she still controlled, bugged out as she saw Harry's wand lazily pointed at her. He tutted as he watched the dark red blood empty from the Blood Quill onto his right hand, his wand in his newly regrown left arm.

After watching all of the cursed blood drain from the Dark Artefact, he turned his gaze back to Umbridge,

"Now, now Dolores..." he said with a sigh, as if scolding a child, "What are we going to do with you?"

A breeze from the open window caught the petrified professor on the flank, sending her crashing to the floor heavily. Harry slowly wandered round the desk to look at Umbridge, still frozen in the same position, now lying on her side on the floor,

"You don't look too comfortable down there Dolores." He told her with a sad shake of his head as he knelt down beside her head so that she was forced to look at him, "But I suppose discomfort is the least of your worries at the moment, isn't it? After all, I'm a member of the Seven... I could send you to Azkaban right now and there wouldn't be a thing that your precious Minister Fudge could do about it."

Umbridge's eyes bugged out again and wildly began to shake in their sockets. Apparently she was mad at that statement. Harry tutted and patted her cheek condescendingly,

"Don't do that Dolores... it's bad for your eyes." He scolded her in the same childlike manner as before. He looked down at her with a pitying smile, "Oh poor Dolores... living in your delusions of grandeur."

His eyes narrowed again and he brought his face closer to her, showing her the intent in his now cold eyes,

"You playing a dangerous game Dolores." He warned her as he slowly stood up, "I am patient but if you don't end this vendetta soon then I promise you one thing..."

He flicked his wand casually and one of the plates, depicting a mewling kitten, exploded in a shower of porcelain. Umbridge's eyes bugged out in panic as, one-by-one, each of her decorative plates exploded and their remains fell like snow to the floor. Harry stamped his foot once to get her attention again before beginning to make his way over to the door,

"I will crush you Dolores Umbridge." He turned to look at her petrified but aware form, "I will use my magic to crush your bones into dust. I will use my money to slander your name until people will be buying for your blood. I will use my influence to have dementors continuously sucking at your soul but never being allowed to fully take it."

His eyes flashed dangerously and the spell cancelled, allowing Umbridge to take a deep, steadying, breath,

"No one hears of this. If I hear that someone else has so much as an inkling as to what has transpired here..." he left the sentence hanging as he exited the room, leaving Umbridge curled up on her office floor.

Omake!

What the scouter says about the word count!

Remus: Sirius, what does the scouter say about his word count?

Sirius: *crushes scouter* It's over nine thousand!

Remus: *jaw drops* What? Nine thousand? There's no way that can be right!

Susan and her aunt discuss Harry having one arm!

Amelia: *awkward* So... I'm wondering if you're still aiming for Harry. After all he only has one arm at the moment.

Susan: *thinks* I think I could work around that. Might even be easier this way.

Amelia: *blinks* How would it be easier?

Susan: Well this way I only have to handcuff one hand to the bed to have my way with him.

Amelia: ... please tell me you're joking.

Susan: *evil grin* I don't know... I mean have you seen what he's packing?

Amelia: *groans* Good God... I'm going to have my own niece up on rape charges...

Susan: *singsong voice* It's only rape if you don't enjoy it...!

Neville Wright : Ace Attorney!

Snape: *sneering* I didn't do it on purpose-

Neville: *points at Snape* OBJECTION!

Fudge: On what grounds?

Neville: *thinking* err... hadn't thought that far ahead yet...

Harry is so manly!

Remus: So I hear that Harry is getting a lot of attention from both Susan Bones and Daphne Greengrass...

Sirius: *sniff of happy tears* My Harry is so manly!

Remus: ... is that you Genma Saotome impression?

Sirius: *stops crying* Why? Is it any good?

Remus: *shrugs* Needs some work.

Umbridge brings a cousin in to class!

Umbridge: Now class... I want you to be extra nice to my cousin, or detentions will be given.

Hermione: Professor... what is your cousin's name?

Umbridge: Kermit.

Class: ...

Harry: Before or after the first voice guy died?

Umbridge: What are you talking about?

Harry: ... nothing.

I think this is the single longest chapter I have done and it is mainly in response to the numerous reviews I received that focused upon how I "didn't handle the situation with Ron and the others realistically". Well here you go, for your troubles you get a very clichéd court scene, with the Minister eagerly rushing the trials in an effort to discredit Dumbledore and those who associate with him, such as the Weasleys.

To one particular reviewer... tick another cliché off the list my good sir! The more we get through, the closer we get to the major divergences from major fanon!

Oh and I still need suggestions for the Omake! Just PM me with your suggests and I will gladly work them in.

Peace.

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

First use of a time skip at Hogwarts, so as to not fall into the trap of making everything happen to Harry in the first two weeks of school.

Vox Populi

School had become fairly quiet after the trials, with Dumbledore settling for giving pitying glances and Snape scowling more than usual as the independent observer in charge of his probation had given him leave to teach but without the authority to hand out punishments. Of course, both men were directing their almost opposite expressions on one Harry James Potter.

Hell, he'd be flattered if he didn't like girls.

But as it was, the glances he got from his two professors were starting to grate on his last nerve by Halloween. Halloween already held its own dark little corner in his heart but the way they constantly hounded him with their gazes, at any given opportunity, was making his mood darker and darker as the day grew closer.

Of course his friends had noticed how frosty he'd become whenever at meals, adamantly not looking at the staff table and getting gradually more annoyed at himself for not looking. Neville had begun frowning at meal times while Tracey and Hannah had pried into it once and then left it alone when he'd done a total emotional 180 and acted as happy as possible in answering, going on to continue the act whenever he saw them. Daphne had begun supporting him by gently stroking one of his hands with her finger as they sat beside each other, making him smile a little and seemingly forget about two of his three least favourite professors. Susan, being Susan, had poked him hard in the ribs the first time she'd caught

him and then outright demanded that he ignore the both of them. With the threat of another poke, Harry obeyed when around Susan.

Umbridge had been surprisingly quiet since Harry's confrontation with her regarding the Blood Quill, transferring her detentions so that he had to serve them with Filch instead of herself. Filch seemed to love this, and he explained to Harry, at great length, that if Umbridge ever became the undisputed headmistress then he'd be allowed to give Harry twenty lashes for just running in the halls. Her lessons were still appalling though; all insufficient theory with no practical.

That was really starting to grate on him as well; he thought he would be getting out of practice without any use of magic in DADA.

These points were combined to be the reason why he was now sat at a table in the farthest corner of the library with all of his new friends sat patiently waiting for him to finish reading a certain passage. The constant stares he got from Dumbledore and Snape had led to him escaping to the library, a place where neither man usually ventured, and his frustration with Umbridge's lessons was the reason why he was sat around a library table with his friends. Neville, finally losing his patience, spoke up,

"What the hell are we all doing here, Harry?" he asked bluntly, not bothering to beat around the bush. Hannah groaned a little, something to do with subtly and an elephant in relation to his tact. Harry held a finger up, not looking away from the heavy tone he was reading from. Tracey rolled her eyes; an act she realised was lost on Harry,

"Come on Potter... are you trying to channel your inner Granger?" she taunted with an imitation of Malfoy's sneer which was scarily close to the real thing. Harry looked up from the book finally, flicking a quill at Tracey for the jab, causing her to squeak,

"Quiet you." He joked with a smile before pulling out his wand, "Guys, I've got a little idea."

Before any of them could ask what the idea was, Harry waved his wand and muttered a few Latin words. An orb of light blue magical energy was raised over the table and its occupants. Identical looks of confusion dawned on all of his friend's faces,

"Harry? Where the hell are we? I don't... I don't remember where we are!" Susan stammered out, looking around wildly. Harry smirked and handed them each a slip of parchment with some writing on it. As each of them read the message, the looks of confusion fell somewhat with some realisation. Only Daphne initially recognised it for what it was and she was even more surprised,

"This is the Fidelius Charm!" she announced, unable to contain the exclamation in her surprise. Harry, who was now breathing heavily, nodded,

"That's right. I am the Caster and Secret Keeper for the Fidelius over The Corner Table Of The Library." He told his friends with a small smile, he gestured to the pieces of parchment, "They need to be destroyed. Neville... if you would be so kind."

Neville nodded and gathered all of the pieces of parchment into a small pile before casting a weak fire spell into the parchment, allowing the slight flames to burn through the parchment but not the table-top. Susan whistled a little in amazement,

"This is amazing Harry! Only people with fully developed magical cores have been able to do this charm over something this big!" she grinned wide at him, "Seems you're quite the early bloomer."

Harry raised an eyebrow and smirked,

"One of us was the definition of an early bloomer... and it's not me." He teased, causing Susan to go bright red. Tracey frowned,

"Why cast the Fidelius at all, Potter?" her eyes narrowed in suspicion, "What are you hiding from?"

Harry shrugged his shoulders, the fatigue from the draining charm now lessened by time,

"Like I said, I have an idea." He replied, tapping his temple with a finger, "And I want it to stay a secret."

Tracey scowled a little at the vague answer and Hannah began to giggle to herself. At Harry's questioning glance she laughed out loud,

"Oh come off it Harry... we all know you just want a place to snog in perfect privacy!" she declared with a smirk. Both Daphne and Susan went bright red, looking to Harry for his reaction. Harry merely chuckled,

"Then why would I give you three the secret?" he asked, purposefully saying three so that both Daphne and Susan knew that he was thinking of both of them. Susan and Daphne dutifully looked away from him, probably to blush harder than before. Neville chuckled as Hannah pouted at her failed idea,

"So what's this idea, Harry?" he asked with a grin. Tracey smirked, fully expecting to watch as Neville was rebuffed by an answer equally as vague as the one she was given. Harry smiled,

"How nice of you to ask Neville! I shall tell you my friend." He replied, his smile wide and slightly exaggerated. Tracey stood up indignantly,

"How come you're going to answer his question but not mine?" she demanded in what resembled a temper tantrum. Harry smirked,

"You asked why I cast the Fidelius and what I was hiding from. You didn't simply ask what my idea was, like Neville, you just assumed it would be to simply hide something." He turned slightly more serious, just enough to be noticeable, "But the answer to Neville's question is simple."

Reaching into his book bag, Harry pulled his Defence Against the Dark Arts textbook for this year before throwing it onto the centre of the table. When all of his friends looked from the book to him, he steeped his hands in front of his face and just stared back. Daphne picked up the text with contempt,

"Well it can't be to study from this thing. It's useless." She observed, getting a fraction of a nod from Harry at this. Neville reached across the table to take the book from Daphne, running his hands across the leather,

"Well... the book's magical signature, from what I can tell, is the same so you haven't substituted any parts of it. Leaving it worthless still." He observed, passing the book to a patiently waiting Hannah. Hannah frowned in concentration,

"Perhaps we should just be done with it and burn all of the copies in school?" she offered with a smirk, passing the book to Susan. Susan flicked through the pages with a disgusted frown,

"This drivel shouldn't even be in circulation. Most of it is so insufficient that it's probably more dangerous than lying about spells and their effects." She assessed, sliding the book to a thoughtful Tracey. The Slytherin girl looked at the book for a few seconds before smirking,

"We've all established that this book is tripe." She tilted her head to the side, "But you already knew that. You were just trying to gauge our reactions so as to present your opinion in a way that wouldn't conflict with ours."

Harry smiled slightly, giving Tracey a slow clap, which she bowed theatrically to,

"Correct Miss Davis." He pulled the textbook closer to him before casually pushing it off of the table, "The book is a complete waste of time. It covers no practical. It deals with no ways of combating anything, Dark Creature or Dark Wizard. In short... it is everything we don't need in a time of war."

Hannah frowned at this,

"War? Who're we at war with?" she asked, genuinely confused. Harry's eyes hardened,

"Voldemort." He declared firmly. All of the girls present flinched, even if it was barely noticeable compared to the general wizarding population. Neville's demeanour simply turned a lot more serious,

"We've been at war since the Third Task... haven't we?" he asked, locking eyes with his best friend. Harry nodded briskly,

"Yes, and we're losing. Badly." He replied after a few seconds of silence. Susan leant forwards on his elbows,

"I'm guessing that our side is losing because it doesn't even acknowledge that we're at war." She noted, bringing forward the Ministry's denial of the situation. Harry nodded gravely, pulling a copy of the Daily Prophet out of his bag and throwing it into the

centre of the table, as he had done with the textbook. Neville picked up the paper and scanned the front page,

"Absolutely nothing about any war." He concluded, passing the paper to Daphne with a disgusted sigh. Daphne's eyes narrowed as she read all of the paper, leaving the others to watch her for a few minutes. Finally she set the paper down and turned to Harry,

"Justin Finch-Fletchley is an orphan now." She announced firmly. Harry nodded the same slight nod as before and Hannah instantly snatched the paper up,

"No way! I didn't see that in the paper this morning!" she said, panicking as she searched the entire paper for the article. Harry sighed,

"Page 34." He told her calmly. Hannah flicked through the pages quickly before stopping on the mentioned page. Her face went white,

"It... 'A small family of muggles was found dead in an alleyway in Muggle London on Monday, with evidence of spell damage. It is as yet unclear as to how their Muggle-born son, one Justin Finch-Fletchley, is handling this tragedy'..." her voice dried up and came out as a croak. Neville wrapped an arm around her shoulders and pulled her close as she started to break down at learning about her long-time friend being made an orphan. Tracey frowned a little,

"That is bad, I will admit, but why is it evidence of a War?" she asked, trying to speak softly so as not to get Hannah upset about it. Harry pulled a few thin pieces of paper from his book bag,

"It doesn't give any clues as to which spells were used." He threw the pieces of paper, now revealed to be photographs, into the middle of the table, "The goblins were able to acquire the scene photographs with enough of my gold."

All of them tried not to look at the photographs, not sure that what they showed was something that they really wanted to see. Tracey reached out slowly and looked at one of the photos for all of a second before throwing it away from her as if it burnt, causing her to back away from the table in disgust. Neville frowned and picked up a photograph. It depicted a man's body, dressed smartly in a muggle suit, twisting a writhing in pain despite the fact that the man was

clearly dead, if the slashed throat was any indication. The eyes stared lifelessly up at the camera and Neville slowly put the photograph down,

"The Cruciatus Curse..." he muttered, just loud enough for everyone to hear. Daphne's eyes widened slightly as she began to think,

"It could just be a pure-blood attack..." she weakly suggested. Neville shook his head,

"I'd know the look from those eyes anywhere..." he whispered before speaking up, "They were tortured into insanity with the Cruciatus before they were killed. It takes more... 'talent' than the usual pure-blood thug to do that with the Cruciatus."

Harry nodded gravely,

"The information I could buy from the Obliviators and the Goblins matches with Neville's assessment." He pulled the photographs back to himself before putting them back in his book bag. He steeped his hands again, "There is no doubt about it. Voldemort has begun to attack Muggles."

This time, no one shuddered or flinched at the name. Tracey, her eyes now alight with righteous fury, spoke up,

"But why attack Muggles? Why would he attack those who can't fight back?" she asked emotively, her slytherin cunning left behind as her emotions took hold of her. Harry sighed, rubbing his eyes,

"Because they can't fight back." He replied honestly, "And he knows that the Ministry, and the general wizarding population, don't give a rat's ass about Muggles."

Susan frowned,

"What do you think Dumbledore is doing about it?" she asked quietly. Harry and Neville shared a look before Harry shrugged,

"He has a little bird-watching club that he uses to make sure his schemes work out." He replied with a slight frown. Neville was full on scowling,

"What Harry means is that Dumbledore has attracted a group of people, who think he can do no wrong, and is letting them think that they're actually doing something." He spoke up bitterly. Hannah put a calming hand on his shoulder and Neville visibly deflated as he relaxed. Daphne's keen eyes locked with Harry's,

"And you want us to become a third party in this war." She concluded firmly. The others fell completely silent and regarded Harry with more than idle curiosity. Harry nodded slightly,

"A third side to this war... one that is against the Death Eaters and Voldemort but not under the thumb of an aging hero who believes he still has chance to live in the spotlight for a few more years, putting people in danger to do so." He replied, his tone tough and business-like. Neville nodded, his eyes alight with determination,

"You can count on me." He declared with conviction. Hannah nodded quickly,

"Those bastards will pay for what they're doing. I'm in too." She placed her hand in the centre of the table, on top of Neville's idle one,

"This will be a noble thing... if we can pull it off." Tracey muttered, putting her hand on top of Hannah's,

"This Second Wizarding War will not be allowed to take as many from us as the first." Susan declared; bright tears in her eyes as she put her hand in as well. Daphne gave Harry a searching stare,

"I'm done being neutral." She decided eventually, putting her hand on top of the others, "A third side is more appealing than the other two."

Harry held his hand over the others, his eyes closed as he muttered in Latin again. A light green glow covered the assembled hands before connecting to Harry's. Tracey and Daphne both pulled their hands back sharply once it was over,

"What was that?" Tracey demanded. Harry opened his eyes,

"That was a special type of charm, related closely to the Fidelius." He tapped his temple with a finger again, suddenly looking very tired,

"No one can speak of this group, to someone who does not already know of its existence, except me."

Hannah frowned slightly,

"So what do we call this group of ours?" she asked with the beginnings of a smile, "Its bad luck to not have a name."

Harry cracked a grin,

"Hadn't thought of a name. That can be your job." He declared joyfully. Susan chuckled,

"A group to get us to pass our defence OWLs and fight a war?" she shook her head, "Not a clue."

Tracey thought for a second,

"How about... Proeliator?" she suggested quietly. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"Latin huh? What does it mean?" he asked idly. Tracey frowned,

"The Warriors." She replied. Harry thought about it for a moment before slowly shaking his head,

"Not really catchy enough for a whole group. Although..." he paused, thoughtfully, "It would fit as a name for those of us present now."

Daphne raised an eyebrow,

"You intend to bring in others?" she asked, her tone tense. Harry sighed a little,

"You can't fight a war with six people." He replied, stating a fact to disarm her tone. Neville scowled,

"This is sounding particularly like a certain Inner Circle..." he muttered, his tone dark. Harry nodded, surprising everyone,

"That's because it is." He rubbed his eyes tiredly, "Voldemort is a crazy, deranged murdering bastard... but don't let it ever be said that he's stupid."

Neville breathed out heavily,

"We won't be like them... will we?" he asked nervously. Harry frowned,

"Of course not. I'm not going to ask you to do half the things he asks of his Inner Circle." He paused a little, "But I will ask you to do slightly more than members of Dumbledore's bird watching club."

Neville leant back in his seat again, relaxing slightly. Susan smiled slightly,

"So how about we call ourselves... Chimera." She suggested lightly, at the confused looks she giggled slightly and expanded, "You know, because we have Gryffindor Lions and Slytherin Snakes. Of course we have to ignore the censure but I don't think most people care about that anyway now."

Harry looked around and saw that everyone at the table was at least amiable towards the idea. He nodded,

"Fair enough. The group as a whole will be called Chimera and we shall be Proeliator of the group." He announced. When the others all nodded he pulled a piece of parchment out of his book bag and began to scribble on it rapidly. Daphne frowned,

"You're writing out the secret so that we can recruit?" she asked, already having more than a slight inkling into his thinking. He smirked,

"Spot on." He replied with a grin as he began to tear small slips of parchment off and hand them to his friends, "One for each of you. If you lose it I want you to destroy it by activating the protective charm on it."

Neville raised an eyebrow,

"You've been doing a lot of charms lately... figured out you're actually a genius in charms?" he joked. Harry rolled his eyes and held up his Family's Anybook,

"Hardly. I've just got my mum's journal. Now she was a Charms genius." He told them with a fond smile at the book. They all nodded and folded the parchment up before hiding it on their person. Neville grinned,

"Why don't we just recruit your fan-club? There are enough of them to make a small army after all." He teased, leaving Daphne and Susan to glare at him while Hannah and Tracey giggled. Harry pointed a finger at Neville, very serious,

"I swear to god that if you bring Pansy Parkinson here then I will kill you."

The traditional Halloween feast was a bit more sombre than it had been in previous years, Harry and Neville separated from their friends by House boundaries which were strictly adhered to during official feasts. They'd managed to get seats across from each other at the end of the Gryffindor table closest to the exit. After the censure they'd wondered about where they would have to sit during official feasts such as this one but it turned out that they had to remain with the lions.

Some of the Gryffindors had moved closer to Harry and Neville to try and apologise for their behaviour earlier in the year and he'd waved their concerns away before waving attempts at polite conversation away as well. Just because they'd forgiven the Gryffindors for the censure, they were still not interested in becoming 'best friends' again with any of them. In the end, Fred and George had sat down next to them and they'd greeted them, something they'd not done with any of the others. The twins were just telling Harry about some of their skiving snack-boxes when he heard a sound he dread from behind him,

"Hem hem." Came a sugary voice, making even the coughing sound sweet. He closed his eyes in frustration,

"Yes Professor Umbridge?" he asked her, not turning around to look at her,

"I was just walking down the aisle when I heard you conversing about items that are sure to be against school rules. I'm afraid that will be detention." Harry turned to see her smiling sweetly, her piggy little eyes alight with something far from joy. He raised an eyebrow,

"I must congratulate you Professor." At her confused look he continued, "I didn't realise that you now possessed the power to give punishments for things not related to the student you are punishing."

Umbridge's smile fell slightly,

"Liar... I just caught you talking about them. An extra detention for insulting a teacher." She declared, her voice becoming slightly less sweet as she realised that she was beginning to make a scene. Harry shook his head,

"But the items in question are inventions of Mr and Mr Weasley here." He gestured at the casually grinning twins, "And they're already being punished for it. So it has nothing to do with me."

The toad-faced professor grew red in the face,

"Of course, Mr Potter..." her face scrunched up a little, "My mistake."

Harry waved her away,

"No worries Professor, although it's Lord Potter." He reminded her as he went back to his drink. Her retreating footsteps made him smile, causing the Weasley twins to grin at him even more,

"Harry that was..."

"... bloody brilliant! She..."

"... didn't know what to say..."

"... and it was even better..."

"... because it's all protected..."

"... by the school rules!" one of the twins exclaimed, finishing the confusing triple conversation. Harry frowned in confusion,

"Thanks... I think. You kind of lost me during that." He admitted, causing them both to grin again before going back to their drinks. Neville was frowning again,

"She's planning something Harry. Regardless of how crap a teacher or a witch she is... she's a very good politician." He shook his head slightly, "I get the feeling that I'm really not going to like one of the announcements at this feast..."

Harry raised a curious eyebrow,

"There's going to be announcements?" he asked, having not heard any mention of it all week. Neville nodded,

"Professor Sprout was complaining about them, rather loudly, when I went to the gardening club. Of course she stopped when she saw us." He told his friend, his eyes trained on the staff table. Harry frowned as well,

"From what I know of her, Sprout is a very good judge of events..." he muttered, although apparently it was too loud as someone had heard it,

"That's Professor Sprout." Came a familiar voice close to the closest Weasley twin to Harry. The young Lord closed his eyes in frustration,

"Prefect Granger... forgive me but I am not addressing the professor directly so there is no rule against forgetting to use her title." He replied, deliberately turning away from the bushy haired girl. Hermione stood up and pushed a protesting George further down the table before sitting down next to Harry,

"Harry... I've been meaning to talk to you for a while now." She told him in her stern tone, which already let Harry know that he was likely to be scolded at some point. He turned to regard his former friend, noting the red tint to her eyes and the bangs under them,

"Do you mean talk with me or talk at me?" he raised an eyebrow, "If memory serves you have a problem determining one from the other."

Hermione bristled and Neville chuckled,

"God... he's got your number Granger." He teased, still idly waiting for the Headmaster to do the announcements so that the food would

appear. Hermione gave Neville a dark look that only Harry saw. His eyes narrowed but he said nothing as she took a deep breath,

"Harry, I first wanted to apologise to you for... well for challenging your temporary ownership of the train compartment. I did some reading and found out a lot about your new social status. We'll have to talk about that later by the way. Second, I want you to know that I was very disappointed in Ron for attacking you with a Dark spell. But it was wrong of you and the rest of the Seven to sit idly by and watch as he was sent to Azkaban! It's simply barbaric to send a teenager to Azkaban! And the way you forced a punishment on Professor Dumbledore was just so irresponsible of you! You abused your powers as a member of the Seven to get personal revenge instead of tackling a real issue, like the enslavement of house-elves!" she berated him at length. She suddenly realised that he was miming a conversation with Susan across the Great Hall and hit his arm to get his attention back, "Are you even listening to me?"

Harry blinked a few times at her,

"Are you finished?" he asked in a bored tone of voice, causing Neville to chuckle to himself before returning to his conversation with Fred. Hermione grew redder in the face,

"And another thing! You have to tell me how it is that you have an extinct Animagus form! Not to mention how your new Runes have changed your body! And healing your arm in such a manner was disgusting! I never would have thought that you would have used a Dark Magic ritual to bring back your arm! It's just so... so...."

"Barbaric?" he suggested in a disinterested tone. Hermione frowned,

"Evil." She corrected. Harry blinked at her for a few seconds before acting shocked,

"Oh. Is it my turn to speak now?" he asked in mock surprise, "I'll answer in order, I'm sure you'll appreciate that. Apology accepted, and mini-feud ended. We don't need to talk about it because I know everything ten generations of Potters have learnt about the Wizengamot and politics in general. Ron deserved to go to Azkaban, the law is the law and it's not exactly hard to follow. It would have been irresponsible for the headmaster to weasel his way out of a punishment by exploiting the corruption of the Minister, something

which I helped stop. I did it because he'd broken the law, and could have made it worse by bringing up several more serious charges against him. House-elves are enslaved but only a select few of them actually want to be free. In fact I understand that it makes most of them lose a lot of their magic to become free. No I was not listening to you at that point; I was having a silent conversation with a very fetching Hufflepuff. I won't tell you anything about my Animagus form, seeing as I haven't really explored it. The Runes are a family secret and I'll thank you to keep your curious mind away from them. I did not use any Dark ritual to regrow my arm; I used one of the thousands of combinations of family runes available to me. There. All in order."

Hermione looked like she wanted to continue to berate him for a second or two before her face softened,

"Do you really mean we can be friends again?" she asked softly. Harry frowned,

"I said that I accept your apology. I never said anything about being your friend again." He noted in a neutral voice. Hermione's face twisted slightly,

"But why not? I apologised for what I did wrong!" she half-pleaded, half-demanded. Harry sighed,

"The argument on the train just made me re-evaluate my friendship with you." He locked eyes with her, "And I found that I was giving too much and you weren't giving enough. I wanted us to be friends so badly that I let you rant, rave and bully me into doing whatever the hell you wanted me to do. And you? Well you only helped me when all evidence told you that it was impossible for me to be wrong. Where the hell was the faith you're supposed to have in a friend?"

Hermione's eyes shone with unshed tears,

"So that's it? We're never going to speak to each other again?" she asked, in the same way she said everything; as if she knew she was right. Harry frowned in frustration,

"You're doing it again! You're putting words in my mouth." He shook his head, "I'm going to do my best to be cordial to you. I will not

ignore you or belittle you. However, I will not be your friend again unless I want to be."

Hermione smiled sadly,

"Of course." She replied before moving down to sit further down the Gryffindor table. Neville chuckled,

"Scratch the first one off of the Gryffindor fan-club." He remarked with a grin. Harry smiled a little,

"Are you sure? I'm pretty sure Ginny was the first one off." He replied jokingly. Fred and George looked nervously at each other,

"About that Harry..."

"... it seems that our sister..."

"... doesn't take rejection well." One of them finished, both of them giving him concerned looks. Harry groaned,

"What does that mean?" he asked, dreading the answer. Fred scratched the back of his head,

"Well you see the thing is..."

"... no one's really sure..."

"... what is going on at the moment..."

"... because Ginny has refused to come out of her dorm..."

"... leaving us very worried as her brothers..."

"... and mother dearest cursing your name..."

"... for not wanting to madly shag our little sister!"

Harry's head reeled from trying to follow which twin was saying what but he shook his head when he realised what had been said,

"So she's not come out at all?" he asked, receiving shakes of heads in answer. His head hit the table as he groaned, "Fuck me. This day

could not have any more horrible surprises or confrontations in it if Merlin himself had cursed me."

Neville chuckled,

"Oh it can and it is probably about to. The announcements are starting." He warned his friend, pointing up at the now standing Professors Dumbledore and Umbridge. Dumbledore took a step forwards,

"We have a few announcements that we would like to make before we can begin our, no doubt, wonderful Halloween feast."

There was a light splattering of applause.

"Firstly, the first rounds of the Hogwarts' Duelling Competition shall take place on the last weekend before the winter holidays. As I said once before, only fifth years and above will be entered into this inter-house competition."

Dumbledore stepped back, to a round of enthusiastic applause. Of course, the entire student body was still buzzing about Harry's duel with Ron so the idea of a series of duels was very welcome. The applause dried up as Umbridge took a few steps forwards,

"Secondly, we have decided on a something rather hard my dears. All student-run clubs are hence forth disbanded and the leaders will have to come to me personally to argue why their club should be allowed to reform."

This announcement was met by most of the students crying out in outrage. Umbridge waited until it had died down before continuing,

"Of course, if any students are found to be continuing a club without my consent then they shall receive major punishment, not limited to suspension."

At this the food appeared on the tables, the pupils all turned away from the staff table and the two co-headteachers returned to their seats. Harry smirked at Neville,

"Do you think we should tell her?" he asked with a grin. Neville chuckled,

"It would be worth it to see the look on her face." He replied with a grin of his own. Harry shrugged,

"I think I'll settle for ignoring her as much as possible rather than aggravating her further. She's already baying for my blood."

"Ah come on... you used to be cool!"

Omake!

Harry Potter and the wonders of Sexual Intercourse! – Thanks to Slytherin66 for this one! (mostly :P)

Harry: *entering hospital wing* Madam Pomfrey... you wanted to see me?

Pomfrey: *nods* Yes Lord Potter. It has come to my attention that you are soon to be entering a relationship with both Miss Greengrass and Miss Bones.

Harry: *blushes* Well... I do really like both of them.

Pomfrey: *nods* Then there is something we need to discuss.

Harry: Oh? What is it Madam Pomfrey?

Pomfrey: Harry... do you know where babies come from?

Harry: *wide eyed stare* Wh-what?

Pomfrey: *sighs sadly* You should have been told this by your parents...

Harry: *blushing now* B-but Madam Pomfrey I alre-

Pomfrey: Now Harry... when a witch and a wizard love each other very much...

Harry: *two hours and many photographs later* BABIES ARE THE DESTROYERS OF VAGINAS!

Harry Potter and the second shot at sixth year! – Thanks to Teufel1987 for this one!

Dumbledore: Well done Harry! You have saved the school from yet another peril!

Harry: All in a day's work Professor.

Dumbledore: But there is one problem...

Harry: What is it sir?

Dumbledore: You've failed your end of term exams.

Harry: Oh my god! What now?

Dumbledore: Hit it Gandalf.

Gandalf: YOU SHALL NOT PASS!

Professor Babbling's Magically Expanding Runes Class! – Thanks to Slytherin66 for this one as well!

Babbling: ... and that is the simple locking Rune. *turns back at her class* Good Lord! Where have all of you come from?

Class: *several shrugs and a few sheepish looks from the large class*

Hermione: Professor! Half of them just walked into the lesson! I've tried to tell them off but I'm being squished into a wall!

Babbling: ... I'm going to need more textbooks.

Harry Potter and the Inexplicable Marriage And Love Cliché!

Harry: *walking happily through the corridors* Oh it is a good day to not even recognise Lavender Brown's existence. A good day indeed.

Lavender Brown: *glomps Harry* Oh Harry-poo! I just learnt that your godfather's family has longstanding marriage contracts and I am your intended!

Harry: *pulls head out from Lavender's boobs* Of course this means I'm automatically in love with you now!

Lavender Brown: Let's have babies!

Harry: Yes, lets!

Neville: *smacks Harry round the back of the head* We're not doing that cliché here.

Harry: Oh yeah... *pushes Lavender away* Sorry Lav, we're going with a realistic three-way relationship here.

Neville: *mutters* Or as realistic as three-way relationships can be...

Lavender Brown: Oh woe is me! And Pavarti was waiting to be the third side of our love triangle!

Pavarti: Woe is me!

Harry: Mmmm yes, woe is you.

The reason why Azkaban is so awful! – Thanks to Fallen-Ryu for this one!

Ron: *clinging to the bars of his cell* Let me out! I don't deserve to be in here!

Dolohov: *rolls his eyes* Oh shut it would you? I'm trying to use my mind skills to prepare myself for the regular Dementor show.

Ron: *shakes fearfully* What kind of a show?

Dolohov: *shivers* The worst thing in the world...

Six Dementors: *glide between Ron and Dolohov's cells*

Ron: *is confused* They're dressed up... as a cop, a biker, a soldier, an American Indian, a muggle construction worker and a... is that one wearing a cowboy hat?

Dolohov: *starts rocking back and forth* NOOOOOO! They're early!

Ron: *is confused still* How is this a bad thing?

Six Dementors: *activate a speaker system*

Ron: ... is this muggle music?

Dolohov: *banging head against cell wall* Kill me! Kill me now!

Six Dementors: *Singing as one* Young man, there's no need to feel down.

Ron: *covers ears* What one earth are they doing?

Dolohov: *cowering in the corner* It's the village people!

Six Dementors: *still singing* It's fun to stay at the... Y.M.C.A! It's fun to stay at the... Y.M.C.A!

Harry Potter and the Yu-Gi-Oh! trading card game! – Thanks to wizmage for this one!

Harry: *picks up a trading card* What the hell is this?

Neville: Hmm? Oh that's just a wizarding Yu-Gi-Oh card. Who's on it?

Harry: *frowns* Voldemort.

Neville: Oooo... he's a really tough one. What's his special ability?

Harry: *raises an eyebrow* 'Unless your opponent has an Albus Dumbledore, Harry Potter or Alastor Moody card active then you automatically win the match by saying the name of this card twice'. Huh. Weird.

Another chapter banged out, along with some of the reviewer Omakes! Keep suggesting them and I'll keep putting them in guys.

I know some of you will not be pleased with what I've done with the 'DA' (I recognise that I can't please all of you) but I will stress this now. I will not change my mind so don't bother to review if you're just going to flame the decision.

Next Chapter;

Chimera's first meeting! Time jump to just before winter holidays!
Harry's holiday plans hammered out!

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: This is set after the fourth book, with a much more pro-active Harry Potter, with the duel in the graveyard acting like it should have done in canon; as a kick up the ass to get him moving faster down the path of greatness.

First session of my version of the DA, known as Chimera. Also includes the set up for Harry's holiday plans with Remus and Sirius!

Personal Jesus

Harry sighed a little as he pushed the parchment away from him as he fell forwards onto the table top. He had been writing up some of his ideas for Chimera but after doing all of his homework it had proved too much for him and so he was now currently trying to fall asleep with the upper half of his body resting on the Fidelius-protected table. Of course the table's only other occupant, one Hufflepuff fifth year, had other ideas,

"Hey... don't you be falling asleep here!" Susan scolded him, poking him sharply in the ribs to get his attention. Harry flinched from the poke and groaned,

"I'm still awake you evil woman!" he cried out, his voice muffled as his head was resting on his folded arms. Susan huffed and poked him again,

"But you're falling asleep!" she accused him, "And before you help me with Runes as well!"

Harry groaned, folding his arms over the top of his head in an effort to avoid hearing Susan anymore,

"Why does everyone think I'm good at Runes suddenly? I copy them from a freaking book!" he cried out again, his voice muffled by the table now. Susan sat down next to him and pressed her body

against his side. His subconscious stiffening told her that her body had had the desired effect,

"But you promised~!" she cooed into his ear in a teasing voice. Harry groaned again before pulling his head upright,

"Alright... what do I have to do?" he asked tiredly. Susan frowned when she noticed the bags under his eyes,

"When was the last time you got a good night's sleep?" she asked quietly. Harry, seemingly too tired to detect the note of concern in her voice, shrugged,

"Finnegan's been acting like a douche in the dorms..." he muttered, yawning despite himself. Susan's eyes narrowed and she hugged him tighter to him,

"Oh really? Any reason why?" she asked tightly, trying not to sound too angry in case it kept him from answering. Harry yawned again,

"The censure mostly... also seems to think that I'm the next Dark Lord..." he paused and suddenly tensed again. Apparently that had been a subject he hadn't wanted to talk about but had been too suggestible in his current state to stop himself. Susan pulled his head down to the crook of her neck and held him close,

"Don't worry about those people Harry..." she cooed into his ear, causing him to relax slightly. Harry sighed and melted into Susan,

"But those people are most of the student body..." he mumbled from his place resting against her. Susan chuckled,

"Well most of the student body is made up of idiots." She replied easily, causing him to chuckle lightly against her neck, sending tingles down her spine at the sensation,

"I guess you're right..." he muttered in reply. Susan smiled a little,

"You know I'm right." She declared teasingly as she began to run her fingers idly through his hair. Harry pulled his head back slightly,

"What are you doing with my hair?" he asked jokingly, but Susan saw the genuine confusion in his eyes. She frowned,

"I was playing with your hair... has no one ever done that before?" she asked quietly. Harry frowned a little before shaking his head,

"No... they either wanted to try and make it neat or cut it." He replied eventually, after thinking about all of the times his 'aunt' had tried to cut his hair, without success. Susan tutted and moved her chair further away, pulling his head with her so that he had to lie sideways across his own chair to rest his head in her lap,

"You poor boy..." she cooed, running her hands through his hair again, "Deprived of such an easy way to be comforted by touch..."

Harry smiled slightly as he shifted slightly to get more comfortable,

"Well... it certainly is comforting." He agreed as his eyes began to feel heavier and heavier. Susan giggled softly to herself and began to twirl strands of his hair around one of her fingers,

"Good... although you're not supposed to fall asleep." She commented with a faraway smile tugging at her lips. Harry mumbled something incomprehensible,

"But it's nice down here..." he clarified slightly, his voice still muffled as he sought to burrow his head further into her lap. Susan's cheeks reddened a little at his words before poking him in the cheek playfully,

"Nice as it may be, you don't fall asleep with your head in a girl's lap." She mock scolded him. Harry cracked an eye open and smirked up at her,

"I know but your skirt prevents me from doing anything more..." his paused here and Susan felt her throat go dry as he licked his lips, "Entertaining."

As Harry closed his eye again and went back to nuzzling into her leg, Susan let out a breath she had known she'd been holding and frantically began searching for something to talk about to take her mind off of the images Harry's words had put into her mind. Desperately, she clung onto the first subject she could think of,

"S-so Harry... what will we be doing in the meeting tomorrow?" she asked, her cheeks still flushed red. Harry sighed and slowly opened his eyes to look up at her,

"Not much this week. Probably just greeting the new people..." he raised an eyebrow, "That reminds me... who have you told about it?"

Susan smirked; now back in the leading role as she had information that he wanted,

"Wouldn't you like to know..." she teased as her fingers resumed running through his hair. Harry pouted,

"No fair." He mumbled. Susan chuckled,

"I don't care Mister." She scolded playfully. She looked thoughtful for a moment, "I suppose I could tell you... on one condition!"

Harry rolled his eyes,

"And what is this 'one condition' oh mighty one?" he joked. Susan smirked,

"You must go to bed. Right now." She told him while trying to keep a straight face. Harry's eyes widened,

"But it's only just past dinner!" he protested. Susan tutted,

"But you need extra sleep tonight Mister." She instructed him, much like a stern mother would. Harry sighed a little as he sat up,

"Fine... so who are you bringing?" he asked with a small smile. Susan smirked,

"Justin." She replied haughtily. Harry frowned,

"Justin? Ah hell, I could have thought of that..." he muttered to himself. Susan chuckled,

"But you already agreed so off to bed with you!" she ordered playfully. Harry raised an eyebrow and smirked suggestively,

"Only if I can get a goodnight kiss." He shot back. Susan's eyes widened in sudden surprise, her bark being bigger than her bite. Eventually she tilted her head to the side and presented her cheek to him,

"Go on then..." she decided with a smile. Harry chuckled and pulled her back round to face him by her chin. Her smile slowly fell as he gently kissed her on the lips before pulling away,

"Nighty night then Susan." He told her with a smirk before getting up and walking out of the library. Susan let out a deep breath and she slumped onto the table top. The tingles from the kiss had confirmed something she'd been suspecting for a while now,

"Oh poo..." she muttered with childishly pouting, "Now I'm in love with the berk... how am I going to explain this to Aunt Ami? Not to mention what am I going to do about Daphne? If she's fallen half as hard as I think she has..."

Susan's head hit the table top rather loudly,

"I don't even like sharing..."

The table had been magically extended for the first meeting of Chimera with the 'lower ranks' included, simply in order to fit the greater number of people. One end of the table had been modified further, the rectangular table top bulging out at one end to form a semi-circle at the end of the rectangular length of table. Six chairs were placed in the semi-circle, with one chair seemingly placed in the middle to gather more attention to its occupant. Down the length of rectangular table top, chairs were placed only along the sides of the table, with no chair at the 'head' of the table to give all those seated at the rectangular table the impression that they were all equal, much in the same way that the semi-circle was meant to give the impression that those around it were equal to each other but above those further down the table.

A calm and collected Harry Potter sat in the centremost chair, looking down the length of the table from his place on the semi-circle and over his steeped hands. Neville sat on his right, making idle conversation with Hannah and Tracey, who were further down on Harry's right. Daphne and Susan were talking in hushed tones to the left of Harry, Daphne's hand resting comfortably on his left knee.

Harry frowned a little as people began to notice the table, which was so obviously out of place in the library. Either his friends had been careless with their notes (which he highly doubted) or these were to be the first 'recruits'.

Luna Lovegood sat down, dreamily smiling at everyone, closest to Susan, who smiled and waved a little in greeting. Cho Chang, looking very reluctant, sat down next to Luna to avoid being sat next to any of the members from other houses, especially the Slytherin members. She sent a glittering smile down at Harry, which he acknowledged by raising one hand up slightly in greeting, allowing him to miss the furious expression Susan shot at the 'Claw and the way that Daphne's hand tightened it's grip on his knee slightly.

From Hufflepuff, Justin Finch-Fletchley and Michael Corner made their way over to the table. Justin, understandably, looked absolutely terrible. His usually tidy curls were a mess, all of them tattered and knotted as if he hadn't washed his hair in days, and red rings around his eyes suggested crying, and quite a great deal of it. He was about to sit down, closest to Tracey at the edge of the semi-circle, when Michael dragged him further down the table by his arm, all the while sneering hatefully at the Slytherins and Harry.

The Slytherin turn-out for the meeting was poorer, as expected, with only the tall, dark skinned, Blaise Zabini. Without a cold indifference, he regarded those assembled. He locked eyes with Harry and gave a barely noticeable nod, which was returned in kind, before sitting down closest to Tracey.

The Weasley Twins soon sat down across from the Hufflepuff boys with cheerful waves to Harry and the others. Lee Jordan waved as well, a little more reserved than the Weasley Twins. Harry stared at him for a moment and Jordan looked away, confirming Harry's suspicion that he was one of people who thought that he was turning dark. Probably meant that he was only there at the insistence of the Weasley Twins.

After staying silent for a full minute, to make them sweat, Harry stood up abruptly from his chair, making all of them jump. Of course, Zabini and Corner both tried to make it look like they'd known he'd moved and were only acting surprised. Harry understood why Zabini would do it; to show weakness in Slytherin House was to invite betrayal. But Corner... well he just seemed to be hostile towards

everyone at the table except Hannah. Harry resisted the urge to roll his eyes. It was nigh on improbable for Corner to get Hannah's attention while Neville was in the room but he was welcome to try. Harry looked around the new members a few more times from his new standing position, still in complete silence. His sobering gaze even managed to shake Luna's perpetually dreamy smile from her face, leaving her frowning ever so slightly. Corner, his frustration having been visibly building, stood up from his chair in a rage,

"Enough with the silent treatment Potter! What the hell are we doing here?" he demanded, his eyes narrowing in what would have been a threatening stance to anyone but Harry. All eyes moved from Corner to Harry, to watch his response to the outburst. Harry turned his head slightly to fix Corner with a withering glare. Corner's leg wobbled slightly at the intensity,

"Sit. Down." Harry intoned firmly, taking care to be very clear about his instruction. Almost immediately, Corner sat back down in his chair. Casting another look at the group he slowly placed his wand on the table in front of him, "Put your wand on the table in front of you, slightly to your right."

Confused but unwilling to disobey for fear of receiving a glare like Corner, every one of the new members put their wand on the table in front of them. The Twins and Luna did it without hesitation, Jordan, Cho and Justin all put theirs down with some concern but Zabini and Corner put theirs down very reluctantly indeed. Harry slowly moved around the table before turning Luna's head to stare deeply into her eyes. Finding them alive, dreamy and unfocused but alive with awareness, he moved on. He turned Cho's head, finding that she leant into his hand a little too easily for his liking, and saw that her eyes were also lacking the dull quality he was watching out for. Corner's eyes were rather hateful but not dulled and Zabini's were full of suspicion. Finding nothing out of place, he slowly and silently walked back to his own seat. Zabini leant forwards as Harry sat down,

"What was that about Potter? I know you weren't trying to look into our minds." He observed coolly, his eyes darting around those seated at the semi-circle. Harry gave him an even look before replying,

"The Imperius Curse." He replied calmly, causing some of the new members to stiffen in response, "And other types of control often leave the victim with little 'life' in their eyes. You have all passed."

Zabini seemed surprised by this but he nodded his head in understanding. Corner frowned,

"And why would you check for such things?" he demanded, his temper still slightly in check from Harry's earlier glare. Harry frowned right back,

"Because I am not a trusting fool like yourself Corner." He replied coldly. Corner bristled while Fred and George grinned,

"Oooooooo.... Corner's a foool...!" Fred teased while George and Lee Jordan laughed at the Hufflepuff forth year. Corner stood up quickly, looking between Hannah and Susan before giving Harry a particularly nasty glare,

"He's insulting me for my trustfulness; he's basically insulting me for being a Hufflepuff! Why aren't you two mad at him? Has he cursed you?" he demanded, apparently thinking it was alright to yell at two girls if he couldn't yell at Harry. Before either girl could respond, Harry was up with his wand in his hand. Corner's eyes widened and he reached for his wand to find it missing from the table. Quickly he looked up to try and find it but a banishing charm slammed into the side of his face instead. He was sent spinning out of his seat but before he could pick himself back up, both Justin and Zabini had their wands pointed at him threateningly. Corner recoiled from the controlled disgust of Zabini and the barely controlled anger of Justin. His fellow Hufflepuff gritted his teeth,

"Apologies for shouting at Hannah and Susan... NOW!" he ordered forcefully. Corner looked from his housemate to Zabini and flinched when the black boy glared at him,

"That is no way for a gentleman to behave." He intoned firmly. He opened his mouth to protest but saw Harry walking around the table towards him,

"Sit back in your chair and speak when spoken to." Harry ordered the other boy, grabbing him by his arm to push him towards his chair, "See if you can avoid offending anyone."

As Harry returned to his seat he took several deep breaths to calm himself, along with patting Susan gently on the shoulder as he passed. He finally sat back down and gave Daphne's hand a secret squeeze under the table before returning to the meeting,

"There is a war on." He told them simply, "Voldemort has returned and The Ministry is trying damn hard to ignore it. Dumbledore is attempting to fight Voldemort but he is not doing enough."

All of the new members flinched twice during this speech and Lee Jordan cursed,

"God damn it Harry! Don't say his name!" he shouted across the table, clearly distressed. Harry tilted his head to the side mockingly,

"Voldemort." He said simply, causing the older teen to flinch again, "Voldemort is alive. Voldemort is attacking people. Voldemort will soon start attacking magical people. Voldemort needs to be stopped."

Corner, who had also been flinching at the name, spoke up again,

"But how do we know that He-Who-Must-Not-Be-Named actually is back? We've only got your word and Dumbledore's word!" he shot back, seemingly forgetting what his outspoken stupidity had earned him the first few times he'd spoken up. Lee Jordan nodded in agreement and the other new members looked thoughtful. Harry put his right hand over his heart,

"I, Harry James Potter, do swear on my magic and my life that Tom Riddle, also known as Lord Voldemort, has returned!" he declared firmly. A light blue glow formed around him before quickly dissipating. Corner fell back in his chair, his eyes wide and his mouth agape. The new members, even the Weasley Twins, were all equally as shocked. Except for Luna, Luna didn't really react at all and just continued to smile dreamily at the world. Harry nodded towards Neville and sat back down, squeezing Daphne's knee comfortingly. Neville stood up and cleared his throat,

"This organisation, Chimera, does hereby pledge that it's two goals are simply; the destruction of the Dark Lord known as Voldemort and helping the students of Hogwarts pass their end of year exams."

He looked around the new members with a hard glint to his eyes, "All members of this organisation must swear to the first promise, if not the second one. There will be no exceptions."

Blaise showed some of his slytherin skills and raised a questioning eyebrow before asking,

"And what if we don't swear the oath because it is worded so that we lose out?" he asked Neville, a slight expression on his face showing his doubts about Neville's abilities. Tracey glared at the dark teen and hit him playfully on the arm,

"Because Daphne's the one who wrote it of course." She told him in a harsh whisper. Blaise got one look at Daphne's carefully neutral face and turned back to Neville,

"Question withdrawn." He announced firmly. Cho narrowed her eyes at Daphne, her gaze lingering on the space between them,

"And what if we don't trust her?" she asked with no small amount of venom in her voice. Daphne went to answer but Susan beat her to it,

"Then we Obliviate you and send you on your way." She snapped back, having quickly sprung to the slytherin girl's aid. Cho looked from Susan, to Harry, to Daphne and then to Susan again before looking disgusted and looking away. Apparently the question was withdrawn. Neville looked around the table,

"Any more questions?" he asked loudly. None of the new members spoke up so he turned to Harry, "I think it's time we voted on a leader."

Harry frowned a little,

"Why? I like the semi-circle idea. Makes it like a democracy." He answered with a small shrug. Daphne gently nudged him, getting his attention,

"We need someone who can give commands in the heat of battle Harry, for that we need a leader and not a committee." She told him, staring firmly into his eyes. Harry paused for a moment, still staring into Daphne's eyes, before nodding slightly,

"Alright... we'll nominate and vote for an overall leader." He agreed finally, only breaking his gaze from Daphne to nod to Neville. Neville smiled,

"I nominate Harry Potter." He announced firmly, a small grin tugging at his mouth. Harry scowled playfully at his friend; he knew he didn't like the spotlight. The Weasley Twins immediately cheered happily and Harry glared playfully at them. Corner stood up and pointed at Susan,

"I nominate Susan. She'd do a much better job of running this group than Potter. Leadership is in her blood!" he announced with a toothy smile directed at Susan. Apparently he thought he would get brownie points for nominating her, an idea which was shot down by her fierce glare. As Corner was sitting down, Blaise stood up slowly,

"I nominate Daphne. No offence Potter but she's got a better head on her shoulders." He announced neutrally. Daphne nodded slightly in acknowledgement and Harry smiled a little as he stood up,

"I nominate Neville. He's got more courage than I could ever hope to have." He declared, grinning when Neville went bright red and punched him in the arm. Tracey rolled her eyes,

"All those in favour of Susan Bones as leader, raise your hand." She instructed. Corner's hand instantly went up but it was the only one, even Susan's hands remained on the table. He deflated with a huff and sat back down again. Hannah continued,

"All those in favour of Daphne Greengrass as leader, raise your hand." She told them neutrally. Both Blaise and Lee Jordan put their hands up. Daphne nodded in acknowledgement, despite her expression tightening slightly in displeasure. Harry reassuringly patted her knee gently as Tracey picked it up,

"All those in favour of Neville Longbottom as leader, raise your hand." She instructed coldly. Harry happily put his hand up, which earned him another punch, and so did Cho. Neville went bright red and Hannah squeezed his shoulder slightly to calm him down,

"All those in favour of Harry Potter as leader, raise your hand." She declared, smirking at Harry. The Weasley Twins raised their hands immediately and started to cheer. Justin, shaking his head lightly at

their antics, raised his hand as well. Every one seated at the semi-circle, barring Harry himself, raised their hands. Harry mocked glared at Neville,

"It's a conspiracy I say!" he joked before shaking his head, "Alright. I'll be the leader. The meetings will resume after the winter holidays, once a suitable place has been found to hold the active meetings. We'll get you the message as to where the place is. That's it for this year, Merry Christmas."

Harry had just enough time to note the displeased expressions on the faces of Cho Chang and Michael Corner before the Weasley Twins decided that it would be a good idea to start a celebratory dog-pile on the new leader.

Harry sighed as he pulled himself up out of his lotus position, arcing his back and stretching his limbs out to try and get the pins and needles out of them. He sighed and looked around the room again, noting that the 'Come and Go Room', as Dobby called it, had changed from the blank and impenetrable room he had initially wanted into a bare room with a single armchair in front of a roaring fire. He sighed a little and fell into the chair.

He's been trying for hours now to progress in his Animagus transformation but all he'd succeeded in doing was pissing off the Inner Wolf. Of course he'd left his centre pretty quickly after that and was now staring deeply into the crackling fire, trying to think about another thing which was puzzling him.

Professor Dumbledore had sent him a letter, simply telling him that if he was feeling troubled then his godfather, Sirius Black, was living at Number 12 Grimmauld Place. From his mother's notes on charms he'd quickly realised that Dumbledore had given him a slip of paper with the name of the house on it because the house was under the Fidelius Charm, with him as the Secret Keeper.

This, in itself, was not a problem. In fact it was a most wonderful thing as it provided him with a chance to speak to his godfather. Provided, of course, that he could find a fireplace connected to the Floo Network that wasn't being watched by either the headmaster or Umbridge. He frowned a little. It was incredibly tempting to do something stupid to try and Floo his godfather and he had to wonder if that was the reason why Dumbledore had given him the address.

After all, he wasn't exactly on the best of terms with the headmaster. And he had no idea how far the old man was willing to go to get him onside.

Eventually it was the nagging worry and frustration over his Animagus abilities that prompted him to make the decision to Floo call Sirius. After all, who better to help with a problem related to an Animagus transformation than an Animagus? But that left the problem of finding a fireplace which wasn't monitored. Where would he find a fireplace, with Floo access, which wasn't being watched? He thought hard about it for a long time before he heard a small noise, like a pot falling a short distance onto stone. He opened his eyes, which he'd closed in thought, and saw a small clay pot, with a matching lid, now a foot away from the fireplace.

He almost began to look around for the person who had put the pot on the floor before he realised that he was in a room which catered to the every need of the occupants. Mentally slapping himself, Harry stood up from his chair to bend down and open the pot. Inside was a silvery dust that he recognised as Floo Powder. He looked into the fire again with a frown.

The room couldn't have really made the fire free from people watching... could it?

But then again, half of the room had turned into a forest and the other a sitting room when he'd asked it to. Hell, as far as he knew the room had limitless potential. So why the hell couldn't it make an untraceable fireplace?

With only a slight amount of hesitation, Harry reached into the pot and pulled out a decent handful of powder. Hesitating only a fraction of a second longer than before, he threw the dust into the fire and watched the flames turn emerald and the heat from them dull. Getting down on his knees in front of the fire, Harry took a deep breath before sticking his head inside the emerald flames. The lack of burning told him that the Floo powder had worked,

"Number Twelve Grimmauld Place!" he called out as clearly as he could. He'd travelled by Floo before so he knew the tugging and twisting sensation when he felt it but this time it was fixed solely on his head, leaving the rest of his body firmly where it was. After a few seconds of thinking he was going to be sick, the world stopped

spinning around his head and he was left staring into a particularly dark and dusty dining room. Dust lined every surface of the room except for the massive dining table and the surrounding chairs, which looked like they saw a lot of traffic. A man was sat at the head of the table, a copy of the Daily Prophet held up between himself and the fire. Harry smiled a little,

"Hello? Sirius? Is that you?" he called through the fire. At his call, the Daily Prophet was immediately thrown to the corner of the room by the haggard-looking man that had been named his godfather. Sirius Black almost flew across the room to the fireplace in bounding steps which would have suited his dog-form more than his human one. Harry grinned as he saw that Sirius was smiling widely, clearly happy to see him. Harry chuckled, "No need to rush to see little old me Sirius."

Sirius barked a laugh, sounding remarkably like his Animagus form,

"If I can't react like this for you then who can I react like that for?" he asked back as he settled himself down in front of the fireplace, the wide smile seemingly attached to his now cleaner face. The last time Harry had seen his godfather he'd looked every part the fugitive but apparently the house had done some good, allowing him to shave properly for the first time in fourteen years. He was also dressed well as well, now in what muggles would have called a blazer and trousers combo. Harry raised an eyebrow,

"You look like Hugh Heffner." He told his godfather with a grin. Sirius puffed his chest out,

"I don't like to brag but I like to think I've got more notches in my wand holster than even old Heff'." He joked, rubbing his fingernails against his blazer in an attempt to appear indifferent. Harry shook his head with a smile,

"Whatever Sirius... I actually called for a reason." He became more serious and Sirius noted the change immediately, and responded by becoming more serious as well,

"Well you can always ask me for help pup. What's on your mind?" he asked, once again shifting in place to try and find a comfortable way to be sat on the cold, hard, floor. Harry frowned a little,

"McGonagall gave us a potion in Transfiguration a while back..." he began but Sirius nodded, cutting him off,

"A potion that forces you into a meditative state in order for you to have a vision involving your Inner Animal. Made for the Animagus transformation process." He rattled off before smirking, "Sorry but she pulled that trick on us in fifth year too. How'd you think your father and I first got the idea to become Animagi? Well... we actually got the gist of the speech from a fifth year who sold us the potion. Same thing really."

Harry laughed at his godfather's story before continuing,

"Well me and Neville had a reaction to it." He added with a small frown. Sirius nodded gently,

"Yeah Wormtail had the same reaction, mainly because he still wasn't able to transform after three years of practice." He commented idly, having grimaced at having to use his traitorous ex-friend's name. Harry nodded,

"Well mine is a bit odd." He frowned again, "The reaction was supposed to transfer the instincts of the animal to me for a short period of time. You only get them permanently once you reach a certain stage, once you have accepted or dominated your Inner Animal, right?"

At Sirius' nod, Harry continued,

"Well mine was a Dread Wolf, an extinct animal. The problem is that the effects of the partial meld with my animal... well they're not temporary like they should be." He sighed a little, "It's like a... like a..."

"Like a small voice, in the back of your head, whispering at you to do certain things." Sirius supplied helpfully. At Harry's nod, he frowned, "Harry, that stage should have been beyond you at that stage. It only comes after you've learnt how to at least partially transform."

Harry raised an eyebrow,

"I've faced Voldemort, and lived, more times than Dumbledore. And I'm now even a quarter of his age. I think I'm the sort of person that 'firsts' happen to Sirius." He replied with a frown. Sirius nodded,

"Well, not to worry Pup. I have an idea." Sirius declared with the confident grin Harry had only seen on his face a few times. He grinned back,

"If it involves strippers then I'll have to decline... I'm kind of looking at starting a relationship with someone." He replied, blushing a little bit towards the end. Sirius stuck his tongue out,

"Party pooper." He announced childishly before grinning again, "But seriously, the plan is to have you come over here for the winter holidays and give you the Marauder's Crash Course!"

Harry thought about the name and what he knew of the Marauders before wincing slightly,

"It sounds painful..." he replied before grinning, "But fun. Sure Sirius, I'd loved to come and spend the winter holidays with you!"

Sirius grinned and held up a finger,

"And Mooney!" he amended before grinning wildly, "It'll be great Pup! A Christmas that I'll be looking forward to in this dump!"

Harry grinned,

"Likewise Padfoot, likewise."

Omake!

Harry Potter and the Proposition (Thanks to KennethRose for this one!)

Snape: I don't expect any of you useless students to create this potion, but perhaps it will teach you a lesson in humili-

Harry: *Sighing deeply* Screw this, seriously – I'm going back to bed.

Pansy: *leans over and purrs suggestively* Can I Slytherin?

Harry: *Slowly turns to Neville with a pained look on his face*

Neville: *Eyes widening* Now hold on a minute Harr-

Harry: BLEH!

Neville: GODDAMN IT HARRY, AGAIN? THESE ARE MY BEST JEANS!

Harry: *wipes mouth daintily with a smirk*

Harry Potter and the Devilish Twin Speak

Harry: *walking into the common room* Hey Fred, hey George.

Fred(?): Harry dear boy-

George(?): -we were just-

Gred(?): -talking about you and-

Forge(?): -were thinking that you-

GOJKJE(?): -would be a good business partner and-

FRROI(?): -help us with a problem.

Harry: *points pistol into mouth*

Harry Potter and the Sprites and the Elves (Kreacher)

Kreacher: *pops into existence next to Harry* Young Master!

Harry: *jumps up in surprise* MERLIN'S BEARD! What the hell? Who are you?

Kreacher: *Bows* Kreacher is House Elf serving the Most Ancient and Noble House of Black...

Harry: *relaxes slightly* Oh... well okay then.

Kreacher: Now Kreacher has seen that Young Master is consorting with two pure blood witches...

Harry: Yeah well I haven't really-

Kreacher: Young Master must ensnare them to ensure the future of the Blacks!

Harry: *raises eyebrow* And by ensnare you mean...

Kreacher: Young Master must tie them down to a bed and then proceed to-

Harry: *covering Kreacher's mouth* Don't talk about that! *Is embarrassed*

Kreacher: *removes hand* Kreacher was going to say that Young Master must brand them as his!

Harry: Oh... you mean like, marry them or something?

Kreacher: *pulls out cattle brand* No, like this.

Harry: ... I'll ask but I don't think they're into that.

Harry Potter and The Nargles' Guide to Breeding (Luna)

Harry: *going in for the kiss*

Susan: *waiting to receive the kiss*

Luna: *pops up between the two* Harry... remember to tickle the Marmels in their Struppels on the back of her tongue.

Harry: *jumps back* What the hell?

Luna: *slowly walks away* Beware Harry! She may be infected with Wrackspurts! Be sure to use protection!

Harry: *Blushing* Luna we have pro-

Luna: Here is your towel. *Hands Harry a bath towel*

Harry: ...

Luna: *Is serious* Keep your towel with you at all times Harry.

Harry: ...right.

Luna: Toodles. *disappears into thin air*

Susan: ... I have a question.

Harry: What question?

Susan: You know... a question about... well everything that's happened-

Luna: The answer is 42!

Sorry it took so long, I've been away for a little while. Don't worry, it's not plot problems.

Keep sending your omake ideas in!

Next Chapter:

Before the Winter Break! Daphne's family problems! Harry gets lucky?

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: Sorry about the time between updates, I've been snowed under with work, school and exam season all at the same time. Fun no?

It has come to my attention that some of you would prefer that I make Draco Malfoy into something of a good guy. I'm afraid to say that the bigoted, egotistical coward does not redeem himself in this fic. A product of his environment he may be but he's not going to change until it is embedded into his cowardly soul.

Weight of the World

Harry rolled his neck a little to relax the muscles, which had grown very stiff while he slept. It probably had something to do with the fact that he'd fallen asleep on the hidden table in the library again but it was too good a place for him to pass up. Unlike his dorm room there wasn't some Irish prat trying to keep him awake or insinuate that he was a dark wizard. And it was quite amusing to see what Madam Prince got up to when she thought no one was around to see her.

Somehow he'd never expected her to be a Sex Pistols fan.

Yawning a little he pulled his trousers on and quickly buttoned up. Looking around the library he knew it was time for him to get up. Mainly because there were students in the library but thankfully they were the Ravenclaws that were well-known for getting up at ungodly hours to get to the good books before Hermione. Lazily pulling on his shirt, he almost missed the green and silver that marked a student as being from Slytherin house. He raised an eyebrow when he found them coming toward him before sliding his other arm into the shirt with a smile, recognising the student,

"Morning Daphne." He greeted cheerfully, waving a little as he began to pack his school bag, "What brings you here so early in the morning?"

Daphne looked him up and down a few times before placing her hands on her hips and looking at him with a firm stare that was only a shade away from being a glare,

"You are the reason I'm here." She informed him with a frown, "Susan told me that she caught you sleeping him a few days ago. I knew it wouldn't just be a one-time thing."

Harry turned to look at her with a raised eyebrow,

"It's nothing to worry about Daphne." He told her with an easy smile, throwing his bag on his shoulder, "I'm fine."

Daphne raised an eyebrow in response,

"Do you know why I don't believe that?" she asked him with the beginnings of a smile. Harry shrugged a little,

"Not a clue to be honest." He replied before having a shot in the dark, "Woman's intuition?"

The smile tugged at Daphne's lips,

"No, it's because you haven't buttoned up your shirt." She told him with a small, teasing, smile, "I never knew you had quite so many tattoos Harry."

Harry's eyes widened and he dropped his bag back onto the table as he began to button up his shirt,

"Smart girls... they'll be the death of me..." he muttered as he finished getting dressed properly. He held his arm out wide for her inspection, "Do I pass your examination madam?"

Daphne placed a finger to her lips and hummed in contemplation for a few seconds before tilting her head to the side,

"I suppose it is good enough for the public." She removed her finger but gave him a wink, "Although the female population may kill me if I deprived them of the chance to ogle at your tattooed form. There's betting pools on where your tattoos stop."

Harry laughed nervously; the thought of his unofficial fan-club trying to find out where his tattoos stopped was quite unappealing to the famous teen,

"How would you know?" he asked as they left the library. He smiled a little bit, "You been betting?"

She surprised him by nodding,

"Yes." She admitted, making Harry stop walking in shock, "And I think I've won quite a bit of gold if the tattoo disappearing under your waistband was any indication."

Harry felt his cheeks go bright red and he scowled at the now smirking Daphne,

"Shut up you..." he muttered bellow his breath as the two were just coming to the entrance hall. He sighed a little and stopped, causing Daphne to stop, "Great... time to face my adoring public... God I hate people."

Daphne smiled a little and held her hand out for him to take,

"You've still got me." Her smile warmed further, "I'll always be here to ground you. Make sure you're head doesn't swell too much."

Harry chuckled lightly and took the offered hand, giving it a light squeeze,

"Thanks." He replied with a small grin, glancing at their hands, "But are you sure you're okay about walking into the Great Hall with a Gryffindor?"

Daphne looked nervous for a second and to be honest Harry couldn't really fault her for being nervous about what they were about to do. They were about to show up as friends, if not something more, in front of the whole school. Now this would have been nerve-racking at the best of times but they were from the two opposite houses, they were supposed to hate each other. And walking in to breakfast, holding hands and sending each other shy smiles and secret glances was not going to sit well with those who conformed to the expectation. She smiled up at him, a small but hopeful expression,

"Maybe it won't be as bad as we're making it out to be." She suggested before frowning a little, "It can't exactly be any worse than what I'm dreading in any case."

Harry smiled a little and gently tilted her head so that she was looking up at him, stroking her chin idly with his thumb,

"Hey..." his smile grew, "There's no one in the world but those we love Daph."

Daphne's cheeks grew red before gradually growing redder and redder at the implications of what he'd said. He just continued to smile and stroke her cheek lightly with his thumb. She looked up into her bright green eyes and smiled a little more confidently,

"Thanks Harry I..." her cheeks were almost glowing now and she took a step closer to him, "I really needed that... I... I guess I'll be able to see you clearly then."

Harry's cheeks grew slightly red at the admission and he rested his forehead against Daphne's forehead with a contented smile,

"And I'll see you." He agreed before smirking, "Shall we go and see our adoring public?"

Daphne smirked but nodded a little, pulling away so that only their hands were touching. With only a small amount of trepidation she walked into the Great Hall, hand in hand with Harry Potter.

The whole Hall suddenly went quiet.

Daphne couldn't help but look across the sea of stunned faces to look at the Slytherin table. She was not surprised to find that most of them were regarding the sight in front of them with numb shock. Although the few looks of raw hatred were a bit of a surprise. She had expected them to have to stop and process the idea for a few minutes before the hatred sparked up. After all, with members like Crabbe and Goyle they'd have to wait awhile. A soft tug at her hand drew her attention back to a smiling Harry. The simple reminder of his comforting presence was enough for her to smile softly back up at him and walk with him over to the Hufflepuff table, where Hannah, Susan and Neville were all sat. Sitting down beside each other, they

both smiled nervously across the table at their friends as the whispers started around the entire Hall. Neville, who was sitting beside Hannah, groaned a little and his head hit the table loudly. Harry's eyes widened,

"Hey Nev... you okay buddy?" he asked, concerned that his friend had eaten some form of poison or something, given the way he'd slammed his head into the solid wood of the Hufflepuff table. The boy muttered something into the wood and a beaming Hannah laughed,

"He says that he owes me money now!" she declared, holding her hand out towards him, "Cough up Longbottom!"

Neville scowled playfully at her before passing her three Galleons,

"Damn it woman..." he shook his head with the beginnings of a smile, "How did you guess they would get together first?"

Daphne's eyes widened at this and both of the people mentioned blushed bright red. Harry gave Daphne an embarrassed side-long glance while the Slytherin witch did the same. When their eyes met their cheeks flushed even more than they already were. Looking away from Daphne for a few moments, Harry noticed that Hannah was taunting Neville about getting it wrong while the boy grumbled into his scrambled eggs. Strangely enough, Susan was not laughing and joking like the other two. She was sitting with her back straight and a sympathetic look on her face. Daphne noticed this as well and raised an eyebrow,

"What's up Susan?" she smiled a little and winked at her Hufflepuff friend, "Afraid you'll have to learn to share?"

Susan gave a ghost of a smile before shaking her head seriously,

"No..." she trailed off a little before taking a deep breath to gather her courage, "Daphne there's something I need to tell you."

Confused by her serious, albeit sad, attitude, Daphne frowned a little,

"What is it Susan?" she asked, ignoring all the whispers still going round the Hall. Susan took another deep breath,

"Daphne... my Auntie told me to tell you before the owls came so I-" whatever Susan was about to say was cut off by the squawks of hundreds of different owls. Susan's eyes widened and she went white as a sheet. The rest of them looked at her oddly for a moment before an owl dropped Daphne's subscription to the Daily Prophet in front of her, settling down next to her empty plate to await payment. Susan's eyes widened even more,

"Daphne, don't-!" she tried to say but it was too late. Daphne had looked down at the front cover of the Daily Prophet in front of her and frozen. Harry frowned and reached down to move the paper so that he could look at it. As he did so, Daphne unfroze in an instant, standing up abruptly before running out of the Hall as fast as she could, all of the people in the Hall whispering and muttering as they too looked at the article. Harry looked down and his blood ran cold.

Greengrass Manor Attacked!

All Three Resident Greengrass Family Members Killed!

Frantically he opened the paper up to read the article, unaware that his reaction was causing quite a commotion in the Hall as the slower students began to piece together the fact that Harry had walked into breakfast hand-in-hand with Daphne, symbolising to the school that they were dating. Harry read through the entire article as fast as he could but he only picked out a few things mentioned.

Wards tripped.

Signs of struggle.

Work of dark witches or wizards unknown.

Ministry Aurors too late in responding due to unforeseen circumstances.

Tortured before death.

One Greengrass left living.

Harry let the paper fall from his hands, which he was vaguely aware were beginning to shake, with what emotion he could not yet tell. Susan placed a hand over his, slowly his shaking to a manageable

degree as he looked up at her. She had tears in her eyes and looked to be just seconds away from breaking down into tears,

"I'm so sorry Harry..." she sniffed, "I was trying to tell her... I wasn't fast enough. I could have told her in private... she wouldn't have had to learn with the rest of the school."

He looked into Susan's eyes, somehow beginning to feel emotionally numb. Most likely this was because the extremes of his emotions had cancelled each other out. For a few seconds he just stared into Susan's eyes before nodding,

"Thank you for trying Susan." He stood up just as abruptly as Daphne had, causing the whispers and talking to increase in volume. He gave all of his friends a brief nod before beginning the long walk down between the Ravenclaw and Hufflepuff tables. All the way he heard their whispers and heard their accusations. Their insults about Daphne. Their insinuations about their relationship. All the way a small part of him hoped and prayed that no one would be stupid enough to declare what they were thinking. Hoping beyond hope that some of the more outspoken students had miraculously gained the ability to shut the hell up in the interests of self-preservation.

Another part of him wanted someone to speak up. So that he could make them shut up.

Just as he was nearing the doors to the Hall he heard the something he was both dreading and waiting for.

"Well what did they expect?" the overly-loud, aristocratic voice of Draco Malfoy announced as if he were talking to his close personal friends around him and not in the a voice loud enough for the whole Hall to hear him.

Harry stopped mid-step, a fact that didn't go unnoticed by any person in the Hall. He could almost feel the smirk growing on Draco's face.

"A bunch of Blood Traitors, the lot of them." He continued, his voice growing louder still. He was safe in the knowledge that none of the teachers were at breakfast yet and the prefects were just as interested in Harry's reaction as he was.

Harry's fists clenched tightly and he stood upright, stock still, in the doorway. Apparently this was enough of a reaction for Draco as he continued.

"Father's says he heard the Aurors talking about it..."

There was a dramatic pause that caused everyone in the Hall to hold their breath as one.

"Apparently they even raped the little one."

The students assembled automatically knew that this was beyond a step too far. Gasps sounded around the Hall, not just from the shock of the statement but from the audacity of Draco to actually say it to the man dating the last remaining Greengrass. Even some of the Slytherins who were on-board with teasing Potter backed away from Draco and his crowd in recognition of him going too far. Draco had just enough time to look puzzled at the reactions of his fellow Slytherins before the table top in front of him exploded into splinters as Harry's Reducto connected with it. The self-styled Slytherin Prince let out a girly scream as the blast made him fall backwards off of the bench and onto his ass. Scrambling to his feet to regain some of his dignity, he looked towards the doorway to see Harry pointing his wand at him. What scared him even more though was that Harry didn't appear angry. His face was completely impassive, but his wand was sparking dangerously. When they locked eyes, Draco's widened and he dived to the side at the last second. A pale blue light of a Reducto flew through the air Draco had occupied just seconds before, causing part of the wall to crumble. Draco got to his feet again and flicked his wand at Harry,

"Sectumsempra!" he yelled out frantically. There were gasps of horror as the darker spell raced towards Harry, who made no move to avoid or shield against it. At the last second a bright silver shield appeared in front of Harry, absorbing the spell effortlessly. Every eye in the Hall moved, as one, to the caster, one Albus Dumbledore, who looked very different. Albus Dumbledore was angry. The Headmaster glared over his half-moon spectacles at Draco,

"You will be in my office in no less than ten minutes Mr Malfoy." He declared in a hard voice that carried across the entire Hall. Draco spluttered indignantly,

"But Potter tried to hit me with redactor spells!" he cried, outraged, "He should be disciplined too!"

"SILENCE!" Dumbledore roared, immediately gaining it even from those students that didn't like him. He continued to glare at Malfoy, "I was made aware of your earlier comments Mr Malfoy."

The Malfoy scion noticeably paled, despite his naturally pale skin. Dumbledore turned to Harry and looked down at the boy sadly,

"Go and find her Harry." He advised him before making his way towards his office. Harry blinked a few times, the facade of calm dropping more with each blink. After only a few seconds he was distraught and quickly made his way over to the staircases, running up them as fast as he could. He had his suspicions as to where Daphne had gone so he raced up to the seventh floor, his rational brain's reminders of short-cuts forgotten as he sprinted towards where he thought she would be. Reaching the stretch of wall that marked the Room of Requirement, he noticed the door that was not supposed to be there. It was a small door, a modern door of light wood with a coat of white paint on it.

Gently he opened the door and stepped inside, thinking for the Room to lock the door as he did so. Looking around at the shape the Room had taken he felt his throat tighten with emotion. It wasn't an overly large room but it wasn't small either. It had two large windows that looked out over beautifully kept grounds. A small fireplace burned lightly in one of the walls, a small blue rug in front of it over the hardwood flooring. It was furnished as a bedroom. White dressers and a wardrobe. Powder blue wallpaper. A large canopy over a four poster bed. A crying girl curled up into a ball at one end of the bed, her soft sobs echoing around the room. Harry took a few steps closer to the bed and Daphne stiffened before looking up. Upon seeing that it was Harry, she burrowed her head back into the pillow and resumed sobbing quietly. Without wasting any time, Harry sat down on the bed beside her and placed a comforting hand on her shoulder.

Daphne looked up at him with some confusion and he simply stared back, his hand still on her shoulder. After a few seconds of silence where they looked into each other's eyes, Daphne sobbed a little louder and launched herself at him, wrapping her arms around his middle to crying into his chest. Harry closed his eyes, hugging the

girl with one arm while cradling her head gently with the other. Not saying a word, Harry began to rock them both back and forth in time with Daphne's muffled sobs.

Gradually, it could have been minutes or hours; the sobs became choked and quiet even without the muffling effect of Daphne crying into Harry's chest. With a sniff, Daphne pulled away from his chest slightly, all of her tears for the day spent and soaking his shirt. Harry locked eyes with her again in silent reassurance and he felt Daphne's body relax into his. He turned away from her a little to look around the room,

"It's my room." Daphne told him in a quiet voice. The sound almost made Harry wince. It was so unlike her regular voice. Where her voice was normally smooth it was rough and hoarse from crying. He turned to her silently and she sniffed as she looked up at him, "From... from the manor."

Harry looked around the room again before a ghost of a smile tugged lightly at his lips,

"Somehow I knew you weren't a pink girl." He commented softly, not wanting to try and bury the emotion in the room with a louder voice. Daphne let out a strange sound, half way between a short laugh and a sob,

"I never have been." She replied in the same devastated voice, "Astoria was always the..."

She trailed off as the realisation that her little sister was gone once again hit her and her voice trailed off into a sob. Harry pulled her closer to him with his one arm around her, causing her to sob into his chest again as she clutched his shirt tightly. They stayed like that for a few moments, Daphne sobbing and Harry gently stroking the back of her head as he rocked them both gently. After a few more moments, Daphne once again controlled her sobbing but rested her head against Harry's shoulder instead of trying to support herself. The silence was comfortable for a time before Daphne spoke,

"Why are you here Harry?" she asked in a quiet voice, quiet being the only volume she could use now that her throat felt like it was on fire. He glanced at her with a frown,

"I would have thought you knew the answer to that question Daphne." He smiled slightly and gave her a reassuring squeeze from the arm around her, "You are the smartest one in this room after all."

Daphne closed her eyes a little,

"I want to hear you say it Harry..." when she could almost feel Harry's confused gaze she looked up at him with pleading eyes, "I need to hear you say it Harry..."

Harry, looking into Daphne's eyes, nodded a little,

"I'm here because I care too much about you to let you cry on your own. I'm here because I care too much to let you deal with this alone." He squeezed her gently and smiled lightly, "I'm here with you because I love you Daphne."

Daphne closed her eyes tightly and burrowed her head into the crook of his neck. Harry stroked the back of her head as he hugged her to him. After a few moments of simply holding her like that Harry felt something soft and slightly wet press against the sensitive skin of his neck. Moving slightly his eyes widened when Daphne moved up, kissing him urgently on the lips. Prying her from him, Harry shook his head,

"Daphne... we can't do this..." he looked around them, "I don't think this is the time for this..."

Daphne sobbed once and shook her head quickly, tears brimming in her eyes again,

"I need this Harry..." she burrowed her head into the crook of his neck again and tried to kiss up it, only to be pushed back lightly by Harry, "I need to be loved Harry... I just want to feel loved..."

She tried to curl up into herself as the tears began to fall at the prospect of being rejected. But before she could curl up into a ball, Harry's hand on her shoulder stopped her. She looked up into Harry's emerald eyes. After a few seconds of simply looking into her eyes, Harry smiled the same ghost of a smile he had been using,

"Then let me love you." He decided as he began to unbutton his shirt.

Harry, Daphne, Neville and Luna were in a compartment on the Hogwarts Express, waving out the window at Susan, Hannah and Tracey, all of whom had decided to stay at Hogwarts over the winter holidays. As the steam train puffed away from the station they sat back down, Neville sitting beside Luna and Daphne leaning lightly on Harry's side. A few attempts were made by other students to open the door but thanks to some locking spells, quite a few of them advanced, they remained in blissful isolation.

After Harry had come down to breakfast with Daphne the next day everyone who had been in the Hall, and done nothing, while Draco made his comments tried to approach them and apologise. Seeing that it was distressing Daphne, Harry had snapped at a large crowd that had gathered around them, threatening them with a very nasty fate if they didn't leave them alone. That had gotten rid of most of them but others were determined to apologise for being the spineless sheep that they were. So thanks to locking and silencing charms when the silence was broken it was broken comfortably by Neville,

"Hey Harry?" he asked the other boy casually as he played a game of 21 with Luna, who had thus far beaten him soundly on every hand. Harry looked up from a book he'd been reading,

"Hmm?" he answered as Daphne squeezed the arm she had gently latched onto. He smiled at her before turning back to Neville. The other disowned Gryffindor smiled a little,

"Just wanted to thank you again for letting me and Gran spend Christmas with you and your godfather." He smiled a little more, "It really meant a lot to my Gran and I'm glad I get to spend a Christmas with you guys as well."

Before a smiling Harry could respond, Luna looked up from her cards with a dreamy smile,

"I would like to thank you for inviting me to spend Christmas with you as well Harry." Her dreamy smile turned into a little bit of a dreamy grin, "With daddy away in Italy trying to catch sparkly vampires I'm glad I will be spending Christmas with... friends."

Harry smiled widely at both of them,

"Don't worry about it guys." He told them happily, "Sirius was happy to have you all decide to come as well. He says it will make his old house feel full of life."

Daphne frowned a little,

"You can't speak the name of the house...." She frowned a little more, "Fidelius Charm?"

Harry nodded,

"Apparently so." He shrugged, "But Mooney has been sent to pick us up. He's got some paper with the address on it."

Neville went back to his card game with Luna but, after realising that Luna was going to win all of the chocolate frogs they'd been betting with, he turned back to Harry,

"Do you know who else is going to be there?" he asked as he half-hearted grumbled when Luna won another hand and another two chocolate frogs. Harry shrugged,

"Not sure on exact numbers for the whole holiday." He smiled, "There's Padfoot, Mooney, Tonks, Madam Longbottom and us. Some of the Weasleys said they'd visit as well. Apparently it's the headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix."

Daphne chuckled lightly into his arm,

"Oh yes... the Order of the Burnt Chicken..." she muttered sleepily as she moved to get comfortable on her Harry-pillow. Harry raised an eyebrow at being used so blatantly as a pillow before nodding,

"Yeah, but Sirius has barred most of them for the holidays using the existing wards of his family home." He smiled at Neville, "We'll be getting the crash course on how to master our forms."

Neville smirked,

"Oh I can't wait to be a bear..." he grinned, "I'll be able to kick your wolf-ass."

Harry rolled his eyes,

"Dream on Pooh Bear." He joked before looking down happily at a dozing Daphne, "I think this will be my favourite Christmas ever."

There we go. No Omake this chapter. I wanted a more emotionally charge chapter out of the first scene if not the second.

Before anyone gets angry at me for "cutting down Daphne's grieving time to unbelievable levels" I want to say that it hasn't gone away, not by a long shot. She'd called the Ice Queen for a reason people. She's in pain but she's managing to cover it more since her first break down.

Christmas break with Sirius... oh it shall be fun :)

Next time: A Black Christmas is the best type! Harry barks at the moon! A darkness rears its head!

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Note: I'm trying to get back to the regular updates.

There has been no rape in this fic, just to clear the air. Both 'references' were not actually representations of rape. Astoria was not raped; Draco Malfoy is just the kind of sick person willing to say something like that to get a rise out of Harry. Harry was not raped as a child, just physically abused to a high degree.

Falling inside the black

As the train rolled into the station, the occupants of one particularly well-secured compartment were all looking out of the windows to try and spot their escort. Well, except for Daphne. The slytherin girl had taken to using Harry's lap as a pillow for most of the journey and was still dozing lightly, occasionally muttering quiet nonsense in her light sleep. Neville had wanted to wake her up when the others had decided it was best to get their stuff ready to leave the train. Harry had vetoed the idea once he realised that Daphne looked incredibly cute while asleep.

It had next to nothing to do with the fact that it left getting the bags down entirely up to Neville as Harry had an excuse not to move.

But now, as the train was obviously coming to a steady stop in perfect line with the platform, Harry realised that he literally had to wake Daphne up in order to lead her over to Remus and then on to... well onto wherever the werewolf was taking them. Logically Harry knew that it was the effects of the Fidelius Charm but he had no idea what had been removed from his memory by the charm, or if anything had indeed been altered by the charm. It could be somewhere he'd never been before after all.

Shaking lightly, Harry tried to wake Daphne with his hand gently on her shoulder. She murmured in her sleep about bad pillows. Harry smiled at this joke as it was obvious from the coherency of the comment that she was awake. With a mischievous glint in his eye, Harry smirked,

"Well then I guess it'd okay for you to throw those liquorish wands out the window after all Neville." He declared loudly so that Daphne was absolutely sure to hear him, "Toss them all old boy!"

Upon hearing that her favourite sugary treat was going to be thrown out the window of the train, a great injustice, Daphne sat bolt upright and looked around the compartment manically,

"Don't you dare touch my liquorish wands!" she demanded defensively before she took in the laughter of Harry and Neville along with a slight giggle from Luna. She mock-glared at Harry, "That was a low-blow."

Harry rolled his eyes,

"Well you were calling me a pillow." He replied with a small pout, "I thought turnabout was fair play in this relationship."

Daphne's eyes brightened slightly at this and Harry was instantly made aware of what a mischievous glint in the eyes looked like on the outside. With a growing smile, Daphne moved closer to him,

"But that's what being a boyfriend's all about!" she teased playfully as she pressed her body up against the side of his, her chest in line with his head deliberately, "You have something against... pillows?"

As Harry began to stammer out a typically hormonal response, Neville rolled his eyes and tugged Daphne lightly away from Harry by the back of her shirt. Daphne gave him a mini-glare, which Neville simply shrugged at,

"Glare all you want but we need Harry to maintain higher brain functions." He told her with a small smirk, "You can bully him with you charms later."

Daphne huffed a little and Harry stood up with an exaggerated dreamy expression, causing Luna to giggle lightly by the door, Neville to roll his eyes and Daphne to look triumphant. Shaking his head as if to clear it, he grinned a little and held a hand out for Daphne to take. Daphne smiled a little more as she took the hand and stood up, still holding onto his hand tightly. Luna and Neville led the way off of the train, their trunks shrunk into Neville's pockets.

Standing in the steam and smoke of the platform, Harry felt Daphne's hand squeeze his own even tighter at the sight of literally hundreds of people in a crowd on the platform. Turning to her, he gently kissed her forehead to reassure her while nodding downward. When she looked he pulled the sleeve of his jumper back a little to show the tip of his wand. Daphne's hand relaxed a little in his and she nodded a little at the display of readiness by Harry. Walking a little faster, Harry pushed several people out of the way as they walked without looking, almost walking into Daphne. Even though her Ice Queen mask was on at the moment, Harry could see her flinch a little whenever someone would almost walk into her. Since noticing the first reaction Harry decided that if anyone was looking like they were going to accidentally walk into Daphne they would receive a stinging hex from him. By the time they'd made it to Remus there was a trail of people muttering about brats firing stinging hexes for no reason.

Finding Remus standing next to the portal to the muggle train station, Harry made a bee-line for the former defence professor, werewolf and all-around nice guy. Smiling a little he waved at Remus, who smiled and waved back. Harry nodded to Daphne and they quickly made their way over to him, with Harry letting go of Daphne's hand just long enough to give Remus a strong hug. The werewolf smiled a little more,

"Nice to see you too Harry." He chuckled a little and ruffled Harry's already messy hair, causing Daphne to laugh lightly, "I've already sent Neville and Luna to a portkey point nearby our destination."

Harry smiled a little before tilting his head to the side with a smirk,

"So Moony..." he gave the scruffy man in front of him a small smile before discretely pressing his wand point into the man's stomach, his expression turning steely, "What form does my Patronus take? Tell me what my father's nickname was. Now!"

Remus looked shocked for a few seconds before he realised that Harry was being very cautious in a time of war. He nodded a little,

"Your Patronus takes the form of a stag." He smiled faintly, "Your father was called Prongs because he was a stag Animagus."

Harry removed the wand tip from Remus' stomach with an apologetic smile,

"Sorry about that Moony." He said as he slipped the wand back under the cover of his sleeve but didn't put it away, "I had to make sure. I've become a lot more paranoid nowadays."

Daphne rested a hand gently on Harry's shoulder, causing him to turn to the Slytherin girl with a small smile as their eyes met with some unspoken understanding. Leaning forwards, Harry rested his forehead against hers for just a second before turning back to Remus expectantly. The scruffy werewolf smiled and held out a short length of rope,

"Grab on." He instructed them lightly even as his eyes scanned over the crowds behind them and his nose twitched in an effort to match any of the scents in the air with known hostile scents. Once he was finished checking he nodded at them again. Harry scowled,

"I hate portkeys..." he murmured bitterly, "Never can stay standing..."

Daphne laughed lightly, quietly, by his ear and wrapped her arms around him lightly. He looked at her with a raised eyebrow,

"It's incentive." She declared with a smile, "You stay upright and so do I. You wouldn't want me to fall to the ground now would you?"

Seeing the beginnings of the puppy dog eyes, and the emergence of the pout, Harry folded quickly and nodded, placing a finger on the rope at the same time Daphne did the same, somehow not taking her arms from around him. The feeling of something tugging viciously at his navel came to Harry as the portkey activated, the world spinning and twisting around them for what felt like hours but was really only seconds. His knees buckled slightly as his feet registered that they were once again firmly on solid ground. Blinking a little, he looked down at his feet with a confused frown,

"How did that work?" he muttered, "I've never been very good with portkeys..."

Daphne removed her arms from around him and simply held onto his left hand in her right, giving it a slight squeeze to make him look at her,

"It's because you were focused on something other than standing upright." She smiled a little, "You were focusing on keeping me upright. Focusing on something else is the trick to staying on your feet."

"But no one ever told you that..." Neville began with a smirk as he came closer to them, Luna just behind him with a dreamy smile, "Did they Harry? Most muggleborn and muggle-raised are taught the way to do it."

Harry ignored his friend's small barb and instead took in his surroundings, his wand still held tightly in his right hand. They had arrived in a small green in the centre of a square of Victorian-looking houses, each of them tall and imposing. It was only the early afternoon but already there were few people out and those who were out were busy with whatever chores had dragged them from their homes and workplaces on a Friday afternoon. Looking back at the little public green again, Harry nodded with recognition at the four lines of white markings that painted a box on the grass. It was a marker for wizards, telling them where the muggle-repelling and notice-me-not wards ended. Remus looked at the four of them,

"Come along you four." He smiled a little even as his eyes darted from side to side; inspecting the area, "Best not to keep Padfoot waiting."

All four of them nodding, having been told of Sirius' innocence by Harry when he'd invited them to stay over at his Godfather's house for Christmas. Remus handed Harry a slip of paper with the tiny writing of Professor Dumbledore easily recognisable. Harry raised an eyebrow at Remus, showing his opinion of trusting Dumbledore to be the secret keeper, before reading the writing.

The Headquarters for the Order of the Phoenix is at Number Twelve Grimmauld Place.

As one, the four teenagers looked up at the rows of houses in time to watch houses eleven and thirteen slide away from each other,

another Victorian townhouse growing in the gap between them. Harry smiled, suitably impressed,

"Looks so much more impressive when it's a whole house." He declared in a quiet voice. Remus looked at him strangely before Neville nodded in agreement and spoke up,

"Yes, our place will be a bit..." he thought about the right word for a moment before shrugging, "Underwhelming... after seeing this place pop out."

Remus frowned a little and was about to ask a question when he realised that Harry, Neville and Daphne were already halfway to the house. Luna patted his arm with a comforting, yet dreamy, smile,

"Don't worry yourself professor." She told him cheerfully, "The Nargles will rid you of the wrackspurts soon."

With that she skipped over to the door, Remus following her with his eyebrows still raised. It was, after all, the first time he'd spoken to Luna. Shaking his head slightly he reached the door and opened it slowly for the teenagers,

"Now be very careful not to make too much noise." He warned them in a hushed whisper as he gently closed the door behind them, "There is a very unfriendly portrait at the top of the first flight of stairs and sh-"

"CREATURE FILTH! UNWASHED VERMIN! BEGONE FROM MY HOUSE!" the portrait screeched, the curtains in front of it flying open with the shout, "HOW DARE YOU RETURN? AND WITH HALF-BLOOD FILTH AND BLOOD TRAITOR MONGROLS!"

"SHUT UP YOU OLD HAG!" A darkened figure roared as he made his way to the curtains from the first floor landing, "Shut up, shut up, shut up!"

"YOU?" the woman in the portrait screeched even louder, "HOW DARE YOU TELL ME WHAT TO DO? CAST OFF! BLOOD TRAITOR!"

Sirius, for the figure was now clearly identified as Sirius by the barking voice, scowled and pulled the curtains closed with a harsh

yank. There was complete silence for a moment before Sirius turned to the group at the bottom of the stairs, smiling boyishly,

"Great to see you again Pup." He greeted Harry before rolling his eyes, "I see you've already met my darling mother."

Harry, smiling widely at his godfather, chuckled and adopted a boyish smile of his own,

"Is she always this abrasive to company?" he teased before quickly running up the stairs to hug his godfather, "It's so good to see you Sirius."

Sirius barked a laughed and hugged Harry back, patting him on the back,

"Oh give over Pup." He smirked as they broke the hug, "I hear you've been earning your Marauder roots Pup. I've been hearing stories about drooling girls, flirting, Animagus forms and incredibly stylish duels... I've never been prouder in my life!"

Harry laughed brightly,

"Oh it's been fun I'll admit." He gave Daphne a quick wink, "But the flirting might dry down a little now."

Sirius clapped him on the shoulder happily,

"Either way, I'm proud of you Pup!" he grinned a little and pointed up, "And I know your dad would be too. Your mother would probably give you a lecture like she used to give James but in the end she'd be happy you were turning out like your dad."

Remus coughed loudly to get their attention, smirking when Sirius appeared surprised by their presence,

"There are other people in this hallway you know." He quipped dryly, "Or maybe you're developing cataracts old man."

Sirius scowled good-naturedly at Remus before shaking Neville's hand with a grin,

"You must be Frank and Alice's boy." He greeted warmly, "Damn fine Aurors. And the nicest people you could ever wish to meet."

Neville stiffened slightly at the mention of his parents initially before smiling at the way Sirius praised them, loosening up a little,

"Thanks and yes, I'm Neville." He smiled a little, "And I have to admit you look less like a rabid killer after a shower or two."

Sirius grinned, stroking his hair back cockily,

"This handsome devil before you is the one responsible..." he looked around as if telling a secret before he winked, "For the tally in the second stall of the bathroom on the first floor."

At this, Neville's eyes widened comically,

"You're 'The Dogfather'?" he exclaimed, causing Sirius to grin and nod cockily, "You've got more lines than any other tally in the school!"

Grinning even more now, Sirius nodded,

"And you know what...?" he leant in close and Neville's eyes widened as he waited. Sirius smirked, "I stopped counting after my fifth year."

While Neville tried to process this, his hormone ridden teenage mind going into overdrive in the attempt, Daphne cocked her head to the side slightly,

"Dogfather?" she asked with a slightly raised eyebrow, "What's the joke there?"

Looking back to Harry, Sirius grinned widely,

"Please tell me you've not told them." He pleaded with a small bounce developing, "Please! It'll be so much fun!"

Harry rolled his eyes,

"I haven't told them." He smirked a little, "But they might have guessed, considering one of the reasons we're here."

Sirius pouted,

"Party pooper." He stuck his tongue out at his god-son, "No cake for you."

Before any of the others could ask what they were talking about, Sirius' form twisted and condensed before their eyes. Speechless, Neville, Daphne and Luna watched as the shape solidified into a large, shaggy, black dog. Padfoot barked happily and jumped up at Daphne, resting his front paws on her as he barked happily. Daphne giggled and scratched him behind the ears obligingly. Rolling his eyes, Harry dragged Padfoot off of Daphne,

"Paws to yourself Padfoot." He warned the dog with a smirk, "She's mine, not yours."

Daphne raised an eyebrow and coughed a little. Harry winced at the sound just like countless men before him. He'd made a mistake and this was her way of drawing attention to herself as she revealed exactly what he'd done wrong. Deciding to take the punishment head on, he turned to her nervously. Daphne's foot was now tapping lightly as she regarded him with a raised eyebrow and a slight smile,

"Oh so I'm yours now am I?" she questioned pointedly, "I didn't realise that."

Harry began to splutter out an answer when Sirius suddenly burst out laughing. He looked at him incredulously, the Animagus having returned to his human form,

"This is excellent!" he gave a now smiling Daphne a high-five, "You're even better than Lily! And Harry... you're even more whipped than James!"

Growling, Harry rolled his eyes,

"Glad to see the two of you are getting along." He muttered sarcastically, "I think I'll need a vacation from my vacation before long..."

Ignoring his pouting godson, Sirius turned to Daphne fully,

"So Daphne..." he tilted his head to the side with a small smile, "What house are you in? Harry's not really mentioned you in any of the letters about Gryffindor gossip..."

Looking slightly uncomfortable, Daphne shifted on her feet a little,

"Well that's because I'm not in Gryffindor..." she looked to Harry for support, who nodded with a small smile, "I'm in Slytherin."

Instead of the sharp inhale of breath or the exclamation of horror that they were expecting, Sirius just stood there with a confused expression as he watched their anxious faces,

"And?" he asked casually, causing even the usually stoic Daphne to blink a few times in shock. Sirius shrugged, "Hey, I might have been a Gryffindor poster boy back in the day but it doesn't mean I'm bigoted against Slytherins like a certain red-headed family. It's kinda hard to hate all snakes when every member of your family in the past three hundred years, save yourself, has been or is a Slytherin. If I had hated them I would never have been such good friends with my cousins!"

At the mention of Sirius' cousins, Neville growled a little with pent-up anger and balled his fists tightly. Sirius frowned a little at the reaction before sighing a little,

"I know why you're upset Neville." He told the boy without a trace of a smile, "But my cousins were different when they were younger. We all were. Regulus was a great little brother, someone who was always willing to use the 'baby brother' charm to get us out of trouble. Andromeda I admit hasn't changed all that much, still clumsy and still absolutely lovely. Narcissa... well she was always concerned with fashion and I guess that translates to a love of money. God knows there's no other earthly reason to marry a Malfoy..."

He shook his head and, upon realising he had the undivided attention of everyone in the hallway, continued,

"Bellatrix..." he sighed and rubbed at his eyes, "Bellatrix used to be so much fun. She was witty, she was flirty, she was powerful and she was smart. But she lost her mind delving into some dark arts. Stumbled across a spell that gave you a photographic memory, to better master spells. Unfortunately it was a dark spell and they have

prices attached. For messing with her brain in a good way the magic messed with her head in a bad way. And now she's insane."

Sirius paused here for a moment, thinking,

"I've often said that I hated them. All of them." He closed his eyes and shook his head, "But it wasn't always like that. I hate my parents and my aunt and uncle more. They turned some of my best friends into warped human beings. They warped my brother into the perfect son I could never be, cutting him off from me. They threw out Andromeda for loving Ted Tonks. They spoon fed Narcissa the same pure-blood crap the Malfoys have been telling their sons and daughters for generations to make her a better match for old Lucy. And Bella... well they gave that curious little girl a taste on dark magic and her thirst for knowledge changed her."

There was silence in the hallway for a long time. The only sounds were Neville's short, sharp, breaths of someone trying to calm down quickly and the awkward shuffling of some feet. Deciding to move away from the subject, Harry spoke up,

"Yes well..." he paused here when everyone looked at him and he realised with a start that he hadn't thought past changing the subject. He didn't know what to change the subject to! Panicking he pointed at Luna, "Have you met Luna? Sirius, this is Luna Lovegood."

If Luna was caught off guard by being put on the spot so suddenly, she didn't show it. Her dreamy smile widened a little as she held her hand out for the charmingly befuddled Sirius to shake,

"Nice to meet you Mr Padfoot." She greeted him brightly, shaking his hand, "Daddy has written many articles about you."

Sirius grinned a little and nodded,

"It's always nice to meet some of my adoring public." He joked with a wink at Luna, who was completely oblivious to his attempts at charm,

"Yes, Daddy wrote extensively on your alliance with the Wrackspurts." She told him, quite calmly, as Sirius' eyebrows rose into his hair-line, "How are they in person? Are they as grouchy as we suspect?"

With wide eyes, Sirius looked behind Luna in an attempt to figure out what to say by the expressions on their faces. The fact that everyone but Harry was attempting not to laugh out loud limited his options. Glancing quickly at Harry he saw his godson motioning for him to continue, giving no actual help on how to answer the impossible question. Looking back at the expectant Luna, he smiled shakily and nodded a little,

"Um... yeah." He nodded, a little more confident when her eyes lit up a little, "Yes they were very grouchy. Especially in the mornings."

Luna nodded,

"That makes perfect sense." She declared, gaining yet more raised eyebrows, "They're nocturnal."

The entire group, apart from Luna, shared a look that spoke of sending Luna to a mental institute before Harry smiled and patted Luna on the back and gave her a warm smile, causing the younger girl to smile back happily,

"Well that's something to tell your father now isn't it?" he grinned as Luna looked like she was going to start glowing at any minute, happy as she was, "I think Hedwig is already here. Why don't you send him the story in a letter?"

Luna's smile grew even wider for a second before she hugged him tightly around the waist, shocking him a little before he smiled slightly and hugged her back lightly. Glancing up at Daphne, he expected some measure of jealousy but she just smiled back at him happily. Luna broke away from the hug,

"Thank you so much Harry." She said brightly before skipping merrily down the hallway, "I'll tell Daddy all about the grouchy Wrackspurts and it'll make the morning edition!"

Sirius smiled crookedly and pretended to wipe a tear from his eye,

"You've done me proud pup..." he sniffed theatrically, "You're getting almost as many fan-girls as me with your new attitude. I'm so proud!"

Daphne rolled her eyes and moved to stand beside Harry again, holding her hand out in an unspoken invitation to take it. Harry complied almost instantly, taking her soft hand in his and giving it a slight squeeze, which made Daphne smile a little more and subconsciously move closer to him. Watching the interaction, Sirius raised an eyebrow with a slowly growing grin,

"Oh I see how it is." He announced with a snigger, "I think you're going to be even more whipped than your father."

At this remark Daphne gave him a withering glare,

"Behave." She told him crisply. If he had still been in his Animagus form it would have been easy to see that his tail went between his legs almost instantly. As he was in his human form it was only slightly less obvious, as he gulped hard and nodded,

"Yes Miss." He replied quickly before growling at the now laughing Remus, "Laugh it up Moony, laugh it up! I'd like to see how you react when she turns that death glare on you!"

Remus rolled his eyes,

"I doubt I will ever be stupid enough to upset the woman with Lord Potter's heart." He smirked a little, "She's bound to be even more stubborn than him."

Harry glared his 'uncle' Remus while Daphne looked amused,

"But what about two?" she questioned with a seemingly casual air. Harry's eyes widened as did Neville's. Neville laughed suddenly,

"I knew it!" he grinned evilly over at Harry, "You're gunna have to try and keep up with Susan AND Daphne!"

"NOW HOLD ON JUST A SECOND!" Sirius roared, making everyone jump as it was completely unexpected. He then cracked a manic grin, "Are you saying my Godson has TWO lovely ladies in love with him?"

Neville grinned in return and nodded vigorously,

"That's right!" he pointed to Daphne, "The slyest of Slytherins, Daphne Greengrass, and the hardest working 'Puff, Susan Bones."

Harry sighed a little,

"I guess not even my love life can be normal." He paused before nodding, "Okay, it's not too much of a surprise to be honest."

"You should get used to it Harry."

"I'm trying."

"Now I think we need to talk about the birds and the bees."

"... Bit late for that."

Because it was a beautifully clear Saturday morning, the playground was full of children playing and gossiping mothers and older children around the benches. It might have been December but children rarely cared very much for the temperature or the weather if there was a chance to play around on some climbing apparatus or swings. The children laughed, shouted and, in some cases, cried as they went through their natural process of playing. Of course the carers were completely focused on their children or their little siblings.

The children focused on playing and enjoying their time at the park.

The adults focused on their gossip and the children.

So no one noticed an exceedingly pale man appear beside a tree a little bit away from the playground itself, his body seemingly twisting into the space from nowhere. His odd attire of a flowing back cloak, complete with hood, was also unnoticed. In fact the only way someone could tell that he was as pale as previously described was his hands, which extended out from the billowing ends of the cloak's sleeves.

The figure slowly made his way towards the entrance to the playground, ignoring the stares and whispers he was beginning to attract as people noticed his attire. Most of these whispers included thoughts about whether or not their children were safe around the man. They watched, some of the moving to pull their children closer to them, as the figure drew a thin piece of pale wood from his sleeve

before tapping the small fence that ran along the entire edge of the playground.

When he had done this he put the stick away in his sleeve again before reaching up with his pale hands to pull his hood down. His face was exposed to the people for the first time and many gasped in shock and clutched at their children/parents when he turned his serpentine eyes over them, a small smile of amusement tugging at his faintly pink lips. One of the mothers thought that this was a good time to leave and tried to open the miniature gate in the wall.

As soon as she touched the metal, electricity flowed from the metal up into her arm. Her eyes went wide, her hair stood on end and then her head exploded outwards in a spray of red mist and grey matter. This set off everyone else, making them scream and try to escape. After a few more attempts, and a few more housewives having their craniums utterly destroyed, the survivors huddled up in the centre of the playground, whimpering pitifully as they tried to hide the children with their bodies. But one child, whose mother had tried to rush the barrier, moved over to the figure before anyone could stop her. The little girl, no more than five years old, clung at the front of his cloak, causing him to look down into her tear-ridden face,

"Please mister!" she cried and sobbed, "Help my mommy! She's not moving and something's wrong with her head!"

The pale young man knelt down beside the little girl and patted her gently on the head,

"I can let you see your mommy again." He promised her, his voice a quiet hiss with a trace of a once charming voice, "Would you like that?"

Eyes glowing with hope, the little girl nodded vigorously. Without another word, the man stood up and pointed the stick between the little girl's eyes,

"Confringo." He declared disdainfully. Anguished cries sprang up from the group as the little girl's entire body was almost instantly converted into a red mist of blood. One of the women in the crowd tried, with fumbling hands, to draw a stick like the one the man held casually in his hand. But with a flick of his wrist the woman's stick

flew to his other hand, just like magic. He nodded a little, "At least one of you is a Witch... you will be the messenger."

The woman, who the man had called a Witch, screamed as she was picked up off the ground by an invisible force before being thrown through the barrier, landing relatively unharmed on the other side of it. The man turned to the woman now stranded outside the barrier,

"You tell the Wizarding World..." he grinned viciously as he moved some of his shaggy raven hair to reveal a thin, lightning bolt scar, "That Harry James Potter is kicking loose! You tell them what you see here! You tell them that I am following the will of the one true Master of All, Lord Voldemort!"

The Witch screamed at the revelation before she turned and ran away as fast as her legs could carry her. The man, apparently one Harry James Potter, turned back to the non-magical women and children with the same vicious grin that he'd shown before as he raised his stick,

"Let's see how good a work of art I can make before the Aurors arrive." His grin grew wider and wilder, a manic gleam in his eyes, "Crucio!"

Harry groaned a little as he pulled himself up from off the cold floor of Number 12's basement, having fallen onto his ass while trying to transform his legs into the legs of a Dire Wolf. He'd managed it but he'd been standing upright when he did so and wolves weren't meant to stand on their hind legs like he'd been trying to do. Rubbing at his eyes he looked up at Sirius, who was living up to his name during the training. Sirius frowned,

"That's was a stupid mistake." He declared with an air of finality, "If you do it again I'll wait until you're back on your feet before I put you back on your ass."

Harry nodded back, but remained silent. It was something they'd agreed upon when Remus and Sirius had started to teach him and Neville how to achieve their Animagus forms. They'd been told they would be trained at different times though due to the inherent rivalry between wolves and bears, namely that both tried to eat the young of the other. So for now Sirius, Remus and Harry were the only ones in the basement. A stinging hex from Remus encouraged Harry to

stand upright quickly. The werewolf regarded Harry emotionlessly before nodding,

"Claws." He ordered firmly. Harry nodded in return and concentrated on his claws,

"Claws." Harry confirmed when his fingernails and toenails extended and changed to slightly curved claws, which were obviously designed to work more with the paw structure than the human hand structure. Sirius inspected the claws before giving Remus a nod. The scruffy man nodded,

"Paws." He ordered in the same firm voice. Harry nodded quickly before he concentrated, his hands shifting and changing into grey furred paws,

"Paws." He confirmed emotionlessly. Sirius bent down to examine his feet, which had remained human in shape. Remus waved it off before nodding,

"Tail." Remus ordered. Harry nodded and concentrated once again. Because there was nothing to change, only something to grow, the tail was harder than the other parts of the partial transformation but it did form,

"Tail." Harry confirmed, giving the tail a quick wag to test his control over it. Remus nodded,

"Teeth." He ordered. Harry swallowed a little despite himself. The last time he'd changed his teeth to those of the wolf he'd bitten his tongue off and Sirius had to reattach it. He hesitated for only a moment before his teeth grew out into fangs,

"Teeth." He confirmed, careful not to let his tongue get too close to his new teeth. Remus examined the teeth, making Harry open wide like a dentist would, before nodding,

"Ears." Remus ordered. Harry closed his eyes a little as he concentrated. His human ears began to quickly move to the top of his head, where they reshaped themselves into grey furred wolf ears. The ears twitched a little, dipping slightly,

"Ears." Harry confirmed quietly, now very aware that his wolf ears were more sensitive than his human ears. Remus looked to Sirius, who nodded slightly. Remus smiled a little,

"Well done Harry. You've come this far in such a short time." He announced in a low voice, all too aware of how sensitive the hearing of a wolf could be, "It's nothing short of amazing to be this far into the process only a few weeks after recognising the potential. That you've managed to transform this far is, truthfully, due more to our experience in teaching people how to achieve their first transformation with only a few days to do so."

Harry's wolf ear perked up a little at the mention of teaching experience and his tail wagged a little,

"You've taught people how to achieve it this way before?" his ear twitched a little, "Who?"

Sirius scoffed, an angry scowl on his face but it was obvious he was angry at something else, not Harry or the question,

"Peter of course." He growled, "You really think that pathetic excuse for a wizard would be able to master one of the most difficult branches of transfiguration without us pretty much forcing him through each step of the process?"

A low growling sound vibrated around the room and it was to the surprise of everyone that it was Harry making the noise, who was more than a little surprised to find that it was him as well. Remus grinned, a feral grin in which he showed as many teeth as possible,

"Soon Cub. Soon." He looked Harry up and down for a minute before nodding to Sirius, "I think he's ready for the last step."

Sirius glared playfully at Remus,

"I thought he was my Pup, not your Cub?" he waved it off being growing serious again, "I think you might be right."

Harry's tail swished irritably,

"What's the last step?" he snapped a little, his new teeth making the snapping an actual sound. Remus put on an emotionless mask,

"Transform." He ordered Harry firmly. Harry blinked a few times before looking over at Sirius to find he had the same emotionless expression. Nodding slowly, Harry looked back at Remus,

"Transform." He confirmed before he hunched down onto his knees and front paws. Closing his eyes he focused on transforming the rest of his body one step at a time. His human feet had been left bare and when the back paws formed, their claws at the ready, it was easy to see why. Grey fur slowly made its way up his arms and legs, the bone and muscles structure changing behind the advancing path of the fur. Now only with a vaguely human head and a human torso, Harry scrunched his eyes tightly closed as he concentrated even more on the next part of the transformation. There was a loud 'Crack!' as Harry's magic broke his spine, quickly adding to it and elongating his torso. Harry gritted his teeth but couldn't stop the grunts of pain even as they rapidly began to change into growls. Fur grew up along his stretching torso as his clothes disappeared to leave him as an unclothed wolf from the neck down. Growling in more restrained pain, his legs extended as well, raising his height significantly. Next the fur grew up his neck, twisting some of bones and muscles underneath it to strengthen them and re-align his head so that his head was positioned in a more predatory manner than a regular human head. His nose and jaw line grew outwards almost instantly into a finely furred snout, which caused him to whimper weakly in pain before his hair greyed and linked with his fur.

There was complete silence for a minute as the massive Dire Wolf whimpered in pain, curled lightly into a ball on the floor against the pan. Remus took a hesitant step forwards,

"Cub?" he asked tentatively. The Dire Wolf's head snapped up to him quickly, the bright green colour of the eyes in contrast to their lupine shape. Upon seeing that it was Remus, the wolf barked happily before pulling itself onto its feet uncertainly. Remus nodded a little, "Now easy Harry... it'll take some getting used to walking like this and you're a very large animal so you'll need time to get adjusted to your new sense of balance."

No sooner had he said this than a black Grim barked happily behind him before rushing towards the wolf playfully, almost knocking the werewolf off his feet. The Dire Wolf greeted the Grim with an excited

bark of its own as the smaller canine began to jump around the larger one in a display of four-legged footwork. Harry, the over enthusiastic Dire Wolf that he was at the moment, nodded and managed to run around the large basement for a bit without any signs of unsteadiness. Remus closed his eyes before snapping his fingers, catching the attention of both canines. He pointed to a spot just in front of him,

"Sit." He commanded and watched as the two canines did so, their tails still wagging although Harry's tail wagged a lot less than Sirius', "Now hurry up and transform back."

Sirius barked once before taking a step forwards, morphing and changing into a man moving out of a crouch even as he moved. Harry tilted his head to the side, his only verbal method of conveying confusion before nodding a little bit. His body began to twist and shrink in on itself, very slowly compared to Sirius' transformation. But after only a second or two, Harry Potter was sitting on his ass in human form, panting for breath. Harry looked up at them before cracking a grin,

"So... what's my nickname?"

Harry groaned a little as he sat down at the dining table of Number 12; taking a drink of the fresh orange juice he'd had waiting for him on the table in front of him. Neville, who was sitting opposite him, gave him a tired smile, the rings under his eyes and scruffy appearance telling Harry that Neville was indeed going through the same thing as him,

"Morning Harry." He greeted, his voice weak and more than a little hoarse, "They got you on the transformation marathon as well?"

At just hearing the name, Harry groaned and let his head hit the table loudly. Daphne, who had just entered the dining room, raised an eyebrow as she slid into the seat beside Harry,

"Do I want to know what this is about?" she asked cautiously as she busied herself trying to smooth Harry's wild and untameable hair. Harry didn't raise his face from the table as he spoke,

"Me and Neville have achieved our Animagus transformations." He told her, his voice muffled from speaking into the table, "And Sirius

and Remus as working us non-stop so that we can transform at a second's notice."

Daphne smiled a little as she began to play with Harry's hair, tugging it gently with her fingertips as she began to hum lightly to herself,

"Oh?" she cooed a little, causing Harry to shiver delightfully while Neville rolled his eyes and got up to find some coffee, "And what's wrong with that? It sounds like a good idea. Helps it become second nature to you."

Harry sighed a little, finally pulling his head up off the table to regard her with a small, tired, smile,

"Transformation after transformation. Non-stop for about three hours straight." He yawned a little, careful to cover it with a hand, "It's really draining."

Daphne frowned a little,

"I've not heard anything about it being a draining technique..." her frown deepened, "And Sirius looks like he can do it without any strain what's so ever."

Harry nodded a little and took a sip of his orange juice,

"That's because Sirius has mastered it." He explained with another covered yawn, "Until you master it it's very draining. That's because until you can make it seem really natural to you it's just like regular human transfiguration. Really bloody draining."

She smiled a little and cooed mockingly, stroking the side of his face with a grin,

"Aww my poor baby." She teased, causing him to scowl lightly, "Maybe you could try using one of your boosters?"

At this statement, Harry's head once again hit the table, making Daphne jump with the suddenness of the action. He growled into the wood,

"I'm a fucking idiot." He scolded himself before yelping when Daphne slapped the back of his head, causing him to sit up, rubbing the back of his head, "What was that for?"

She glared at him a little,

"For swearing." She told him firmly, "So don't do it again."

Harry nodded before sighing,

"Sorry, just wondering how I could have been stupid enough to forget." He muttered before nodding and unbuttoning his shirt, "This'll be the first time I do this..."

He moved his now open shirt aside to reveal the three triangle runes just a little off centre on his stomach. Taking a deep breath he touched one of the base triangles with his wand tip. A second later the small triangle began to glow a bright green, the same colour as Harry's eyes. Daphne raised an eyebrow as Harry frowned a little,

"This... feels weird." He decided eventually, looking a lot less tired, "It's like my core is full again... but it's overflowing about twice as much. The rune replaced all the energy in my core and has a refill at the ready for it... weird."

Daphne shrugged a little,

"Try a spell out." She suggested. Not seeing the harm in it, Harry raised his wand to the ceiling,

"Lumos." He said quietly. The light spell solidified as a ball of light hanging in the middle of the ceiling. He frowned, "Exactly the same. Guess it just gives me twice the amount of reserves, not twice as much power. Oh well."

Harry tapped the triangle again, deactivating the rune. Immediately the energy that had filled and refilled him was gone, leaving him with the nearly empty core he'd had before the use of the rune. Daphne rushed to his side to hold him upright as he fell over, his legs giving out beneath him. He blinked stupidly a few times,

"Not to self... don't turn that thing off without being in a bed."

"That's most likely to be a bed in the hospital wing knowing you."

"... that's true."

There you go! Another chapter ^_^

Be thankful I've got tons of free periods, it's the reason why it's this long without Omake :P

I'll try to get another chapter done for the informal two-week deadline. Hope you enjoyed my crappy attempt at foreshadowing :P

Next chapter – Christmas presents! Death! Fights! Sights! Flights!
It's the most wonderful time of the year

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: I tried to do the whole 'regular updates' thing now that it's the summer but this kind of just flowed out instead... 42 pages on Microsoft word! I'm freaking tripping here!

Warning! – The rating does change for a part of this chapter. During the fight scene towards the end the description becomes bloodier and filled with gore. So that area is clearly marked. Might be over-reacting but I don't think I am

Mein Teil (My Part)

Harry and Neville sat down at the dining room table of Number 12, which was cleared entirely for the first time in months, staring across the expanse of dark wood at their hosts. Sirius Black, current public Head of the Most Ancient and Most Noble House of Black, escaped convict, illegal Animagus and Marauder Extraordinaire, sat directly across from Harry Potter, his godson, completely serious for the first time in years. That left Remus Lupin, werewolf, ex-professor and Marauder Extraordinaire, facing Neville Longbottom, staring unflinchingly at the young man with intensity rivalled only by the eyes of his lupine form.

The two school boys looked away from their respective Marauders to glance at each other for a few seconds. Neville raised an eyebrow, to which Harry shrugged minutely, an action so small it could hardly have been said to have occurred at all. Still, Neville caught it and turned back to Remus as Harry turned back to Sirius. Slowly, Sirius reached under the table and pulled a large metallic disk from out under the table, presumably from a bag of some sort. Placing it between the four of them, the disk hovered just slightly above the table-top in complete silence. Harry frowned ever so slightly,

"That's a pensieve." Harry announced without even pretence of phrasing it as a question, because after having used one it was pretty obvious what one looks like. You don't easily forget watching the 'trial' of Barty Crouch Jr. and the Lestranges. Sirius nodded once,

"It is." He answered curtly. The tone of Sirius' voice made Harry frown a little more. Sirius was never this, if you'll pardon the pun, serious. He decided that it was time to voice this fear,

"You're acting very serious, Sirius." He observed, his wand in his hand under the table now, "You told us that this would be the beginning of lessons on duelling. I see only a pensieve."

Remus answered instead of Sirius,

"You are here to learn the basic principle of duelling." He reached out and touched a rune along the edge of the pensieve, making the swirling memories glow brightly, "You will learn this lesson without ever using your wand."

Neville and Harry shared another glance before the Lord Longbottom nodded at the pensieve,

"So what is the basic principle of duelling?" he asked, deciding to cut right to the chase. Remus looked at Sirius, who nodded a little as he accepted the duty of answering the question,

"That every duellist in the world falls into at least one category." He answered firmly, still completely serious, "And each category has at least one weakness."

Harry's eyes widened slowly,

"So every duellist has at least one weakness in their duelling." He concluded excitedly, smiling slightly now, "Even Voldemort."

Remus nodded with his own small smile,

"Even Voldemort." He agreed before he tapped another rune on the pensieve. The memories glowed brighter before the light seemed to stretch up, forming a six inch tall image of Alastor Moody. Neville lent in closer to the small, stationary, image with a frown,

"He's got his whole nose." He observed, glancing at Harry, "He lost some of his nose at the end of the war."

Harry nodded in agreement,

"It's a younger Moody." He smiled slightly at Sirius and Remus, "When he was in his prime."

Sirius, who was now noticeably more relaxed, nodded a little,

"We could just tell you the different types of duellists and leave you with just general characteristics..." he smirked a little, "But we have examples of each to show you."

Harry raised an eyebrow,

"All Order members?" he frowned a little, "If these memories were to fall into the wrong hands they would show any holes in the defences of each member right?"

Sirius and Remus shared a small smile,

"Two things Harry..." Remus began with a grin, "The first thing is that there are some non-order members in there as well. These projections are made from several different memories, from several different people, to create a balanced view of that person's capabilities."

Sirius took in up,

"And as for why it's not a risk to the Order's security..." he grinned, "Well they don't know about it. It's an invasion of privacy after all, or some such nonsense."

Harry smirked at Neville,

"There's the reckless and funny Sirius we all know and love." He commented wryly before nodding at the projection of Moody, "So what does Mini-Moody have to teach us?"

Sirius pointed to the magical eye that the projection of Moody was fitted with,

"Mad-Eye Moody's greatest strength." He smirked, "This sucker was built with all the enhancements by the Department of Mysteries. Why? Because it made Moody a much better duellist, easily making him the single most dangerous Auror on the Ministry's payroll at the

time. Why does it increase his duelling abilities so drastically? Because of the form of duelling that Moody uses."

Neville frowned in thought while Harry looked slightly confused,

"You mean there's more than one form of duelling?" he asked, frowning as he thought, "It makes sense but I didn't think people would stick to just one... that does seem to give way too much of a target and too many weaknesses."

Remus nodded and tapped the projection of Moody with his wand. The figure sprang to life, ducking and weaving behind objects, walls and barriers that the pensieve projected as well. Miniature spells were shown to be flying in all directions as well as several vague outlines of what appeared to be Death Eaters. One by one Moody took the Death Eaters down, seeming to know where they were going to attack from and what parts of the environment could be used against them. Neville blinked a few times when Moody, who was fighting a Death Eater who had managed to flank him by charging, dodged a curse from behind effortlessly,

"He's using his magical eye to see every part of the battlefield..." he paused in thought, "And then duelling with the environment. Because he knows every part of the environment he can use everything against the Death Eaters!"

Sirius scowled and handed a galleon over to Remus, who was grinning widely,

"Very good observation Neville!" he smirked at Sirius, "If I could I'd award points for not only getting it right but getting it right first and winning me a bet."

Shaking his head, Sirius turned back to the boys,

"Moody uses two forms of Duelling." He gestured at the way Moody pulled down an unstable wall onto some hidden Death Eaters, "Environmental Duelling. This type of Duellist is not only aware of his surroundings at all times but is also capable of using almost all aspects of the environment to his advantage. Transfiguration Masters excel in this form of Duelling, as do vicious or paranoid spell-casters like Moody. Constant vigilance and all that."

Remus pointed to the display as the Mini-Moody fired a very powerful flame curse, engulfing half the room in fire,

"This is an example of his other form of Duelling." He smirked a little, "Moody is a naturally powerful wizard, his core is bigger than average so he can afford to use heavier spells or over-powered regular spells. When a Duellist focuses on using these more powerful spells we call them a Hammer. So called because a Hammer Duellist is a heavy hitter, these guys are the ones you call in to demolish a building instead of taking prisoners. Understand?"

Harry and Neville shared a look before Harry spoke up,

"What are the disadvantages of being a Hammer?" he shrugged, "Or an Environmentalist for that matter."

Sirius nodded,

"The Environmentalist Duellist is typically not a strong wizard. They use the environment to their advantage because their own power is somehow lacking. This is not true of all however, it's one of the reasons why Moody is a excellent Duellist, Hammer and Environmentalist fit together very well." He told them, shifting to a lecture mode that surprised everyone else in the room, "Environmentalists can be beaten however. Due to their need to analyse every aspect of the battlefield they are often slower to react than other types of Duellists. Another is that you can distract them rather easily. If you change the environment in any significant way you catch them flat-footed for between 2 to 5 seconds. For most competent Duellist's this is more than enough time to put them on the defensive if not defeat them."

When Sirius slid out of his lecture mode he noticed that all of the others were looking at him funny, which was shown best when Remus, in slight shock, asked,

"What the hell was that Padfoot?" he asked in surprise, "That was so... so... serious!"

Sirius adopted a haunted look as his mouth pulled into a thin line,

"Azkaban does that to a man Moony." He replied icily, "You grow serious if you go insane."

Remus, looking very uncomfortable and obviously still very anguished over not believing Sirius initially, turned back to the display,

"Right... well a Hammer Duellist has simpler weaknesses." He pointed to the projection of Moody, which received a nasty hit after firing off an over-powered blasting curse, "Bigger spells need more concentration. They also tire the caster out faster, so try to drag out the fight if you meet one of these buggers. Their spells, while powerful, are often infrequent because of it. Speed of casting is not their speciality."

After Harry and Neville nodded their understanding, Sirius touched the pensieve with his wand. The Mini-Moody disappeared, replaced by a taller man dressed in finer clothes than Moody, namely a black waistcoat, trousers and a bright red dress shirt. His hair was shaggy in a handsome way and he had a disgustingly handsome smirk. Neville's eyes widened,

"He's one of the Death Eaters that escaped!" he announced, his knuckles growing white as he clenched his fists tightly, "That's Antonin Dolohov."

Sirius, still looking very dark and serious, nodded solemnly,

"That's right Neville." He gestured at the projection, "This is Antonin Dolohov, Voldemort's number one Duellist. The Death Eater with more kills under his belt than perhaps even the Dark Wanker himself."

Harry stared at the man intently for a few moments before frowning,

"He looks so... normal." He muttered quietly, "Like he isn't a killer, just some upper class jerk."

Remus nodded, sadly,

"And that's one of the reasons why he was so good." He remarked, "Dolohov is not only one of the top Duellists in Voldemort's army but he was used as an infiltrator in the last war. Not deep undercover or anything jus-"

Sirius cut him off coldly,

"Just enough to get himself into the centre of a crowd..." his eyes darkened even more as he growled out, "And then cut them all to ribbons when they were attacked from the back and the front."

Seeing that the atmosphere was rapidly becoming darker by the minute, Remus tapped the pensieve with his wand. The Mini-Dolohov smirked even wider than before and bowed mockingly to his opponent, who was none other than Filius Flitwick, who scowled in response before beginning to fire off a long chain of spells, one which seemed to flow perfectly and without pause. Dolohov, still smirking, dispelled, blocked, narrowly dodge and countered each spell in Flitwick's spell chain with his own, equally smooth, chain of counters.

Harry and Neville watched, open mouthed, as the two Master Duellists used increasingly intricate spell chains against each other, hardly moving as they countered each other's spells just in the nick of time, seemingly every time. Remus tapped the pensieve and the image froze. At the expectant looks of Harry and Neville he shrugged,

"This duel goes on like this for quite a long time." He replied before nodding at the image, "Besides, it shows Dolohov's key form of Duelling quite nicely, as well as Flitwick's. Dolohov and Flitwick are Weavers. They Weave spells together into long and complicated chains that they make up on the spot to keep themselves unpredictable. The main advantage of being a Weaver is that to attack you your opponent has to find a break in your chain long enough to take the initiative."

Sirius, who was glaring at the smirking Mini-Dolohov hatefully, nodded,

"But they have weaknesses." He muttered darkly, "First and foremost is to cut them off. Don't let them start an effective spell chain because if they do, chances are you're screwed. Another is to get them to move. Movement distracts them from their spells and they need complete concentration to keep their spell chains going. And lastly... overpower them. Force some powerful spells straight through their chains to break their concentration and when a small

opening shows up you form as much power in as possible, break them before they can start up the chain again."

Remus, who was rather distressed by his friend's dark mood, tapped the pensieve to re-start the projection. The duel continued as it had done before; long spell chains on both sides to counter and to attack in equal measure. Then the Mini-Dolohov's smirk grew even larger and he began to use different spells, which even in a projection without sound were seen to be cutting curses in nature based on the slashing motions of his wand. Remus paused the display,

"The second form of Duelling that Dolohov incorporates." He looked up at Harry and Neville, now just as serious as Sirius, "He's a Specialist. Specifically, a Cutting Specialist. Now a Specialist is a Duellist with particular talent in one area of spell casting. Dumbledore is a Transfiguration Specialist. Voldemort is a Dark Arts Specialist. Dolohov is a Cutting Specialist and he is a master of any spell, curse or hex that cuts an opponent. Not only is he a master of most known cutting spells but he's also created several of his own. Including a nasty purple curse that I want you look out for most of all. It doesn't cut your skin. It passes through your skin and cuts you insides."

Neville looked rather queasy at this and Harry looked at the handsome, smirking, man in the projection before him. Outwardly he showed no inclination of being such a nasty piece of work as to favour cutting his opponents at every given opportunity. Sirius scowled darkly at the projection,

"I was in the cell next to Dolohov..." he spat at the projection, "Bastard never stopped smirking, even when the dementors came for their rounds. Not only did Dolohov not feel guilt, he felt pride! Son of a bitch thought of himself as some kind of a sportsman... like every kill was like a game of chess he'd won!"

Both Harry and Neville looked at the projection of the smirking man was no small amount of disgust before Neville looked up at Remus,

"What are the weaknesses of being a Cutting Specialist?" he asked, before glancing back at the projection, "I don't want to be caught out if I have to fight that guy."

Nodding at Neville's reasoning, Remus tapped the pensieve and they all watched as Flitwick conjured a block of marble, which took many of the cutting curses without being damaged too much. Mini-Dolohov's smirk fell into a dark scowl and he tried to change his chain but it was too late, Flitwick had seized the initiative and was hammering him with a very effective spell chain. Remus stopped the projection,

"Simple really. Don't. Get. Cut." He looked at both Harry and Neville sternly, "You throw whatever you have to block the spells. You make sure that not one of them hits you. Other than that you have to somehow force them to stop using their Specialist skill. Like Dolohov would have had to resort to a blasting curse to break the marble, break a chain of cutting spells. Or Dumbledore would have to stop using transfiguration to fight against powerful blasting curses."

Sirius tapped the pensieve sharply with his wand, the image changing to a projection of a younger Minerva McGonagall. He gestured to the figure as it began to nimbly dodge curses, sending incredibly accurate curses in return,

"Minerva McGonagall. In a duel you'd almost never know she was a Transfiguration Specialist." He shrugged a little, "But that's because she's predominantly a Scalpel. If a Duellist is a Scalpel they are the opposite of a Hammer Duellist. A Hammer uses sheer force to win. A Scalpel uses the minimum amount of force required but uses it to its utmost efficiency."

Remus took up the monologue, happy to see that his friend was going to slowly move away from his dark mood,

"Exactly right. A piercing curse that hits the brain through the eye is just as deadly as a killing curse but requires nowhere near the same power." He added before moving onto the weaknesses, "This form of Duelling is very hard to perfect and even when perfect it has many weaknesses. One simple weakness is that if you survive the 'perfect' shot they land and are still able to fight they will be surprised and unlikely to defend well. Another is the speed and frequency of casting; they take a long time aiming and only fire a bare minimum number of spells."

Neville frowned a little as Harry leant back in his chair with a sigh,

"So... that's it?" he asked, frowning a little more as he glanced at Harry, "None of those sound like they're all that good."

Sirius tapped the pensieve again and another figure rose as a projection. Harry's eyes widened at what appeared to be a mini-projection of him. The hair was a messy black like his and he looked identical in almost every way but the way the figure held itself, even paused, showed confidence that seemed to border on arrogance. His blood ran cold,

"That's..." he stopped to swallow nervously, "That's my father..."

Two more figures appeared, one was obviously a younger Sirius who did hold himself with almost palpable arrogance. The other made Neville stiffen a little but otherwise fail to react as the three men squared off against three Death Eaters, three Inner Circle members if they intricate patterns of their silver masks were anything to go by. Sirius pointed to the display,

"The First Battle of Ipswich." He told them quietly, "I fought Rookwood. Frank faced Avery. And James..."

He stopped, looking away from the projection. Remus patted his friend on the shoulder and continued,

"James went up against Macnair." He finished, pointing to the only figure on the projection that apparently didn't feel the need to wear a shirt, "He's a tough one. Can't let him get close or he'll use the axe and cut you in two. That and he's really annoying because he never wears a freaking shirt."

Neville shuddered a little,

"I've heard some nasty things about Avery..." he smirked darkly, "But I never knew he tried to look like some kind of pirate."

Remus chuckled darkly,

"If you ever have the misfortune of meeting Avery make sure to call him a pirate." He smirked, "Makes him angry. Makes him very reckless."

The projection began to move, with each other the figures squaring off against one person on the opposite side of the street. Macnair seemed to be on the ropes from the start, as James Potter was flinging a massive volume of curses and spells at the other man, not letting him get a chance to fight back effectively. Remus pointed to the projection of James as he began to send a flurry of cutting curses at Macnair, most of which the Death Eater wasn't able to block and he suffered several mild cuts along his body,

"James was a special kind of Duellist." He told them quietly, trying not to get caught up in his memories as Sirius was doing, "He was a Storm Duellist. The basic principle is that you fire as many curses as you can, as fast as you can to overwhelm your enemy. Most of the time these curses are pretty low level stuff, minor cutting or piercing curses. Alone they're pretty crap. But if you fire of thirty cutting curses within half a minute? Chances are you've won."

Harry watched as the projection of his father taunted Macnair as he continued to push the Death Eater back through sheer volume of spells. He glanced up at Remus,

"What are the disadvantages of being a Storm Duellist?" he asked quietly. He wasn't stupid enough to think that his father's Duelling style had been invincible, even if it did look like a viable route for his own Duelling style. Remus sighed a little,

"You run the risk of depleting your magic core, very quickly." He admitted reluctantly, "That and you have to have some pretty amazing reflexes and co-ordination to fire that many spells, all correctly, that quickly."

Neville pointed to the projection of his father, who was pulling stretches of the muggle tarmac up in sheets to block some of Avery's very unfriendly curses,

"What's my dad doing?" he wondered aloud, "Looks like he's on the defensive through choice."

Remus nodded,

"That's because he is." He smiled at Neville, "Your father was a Guardian style Duellist, Neville. He could throw up hugely powerful shields with a flick of his wrist. Saved so many lives by being able to

block almost any curse quickly and efficiently."

For the first time since the projection had started to simulate the real fighting, Sirius spoke up in a rough and scratchy voice,

"Here..." he stopped when his voice cracked before continuing, "Here it comes Remus..."

Reaching over, Remus wrapped an arm around his best friend's shoulders and gave him a one-armed, manly, hug,

"They need to learn from mistakes Sirius..." he paused as he looked sadly at the projected fight as well, "Even if it is something terrible."

Now watching with even more interest, Harry and Neville leant forward in their seats to watch as the battle unfolded before them. Frank seemed to have called Avery a pirate; if the Death Eater's frantic gesturing at his bandana was any indication. The fight between James and Macnair was going well for the good guys, with James keeping Macnair on the defensive and keeping his giant axe at a safe distance.

What was not going well for the Order was the fight between Sirius and Rookwood. The marauder seemed to be having a lot of fun in the projection, dancing around nimbly on his feet and taunting Rookwood even more than James had been taunting Macnair, and James had had a clear advantage while Sirius did not. During one especially long taunt, the projection of Sirius was distracted and caught unaware by the summoned brick that slammed into the back of his head and threw him to the ground. Before Rookwood could finish the fight however, he was blasted backwards by a powerful bludgeoning hex by James, who was rushing to Sirius' side.

Sirius, the one sitting at the table reviewing the past battle, flinched as he knew what came next.

Harry's eyes widened and he almost called out to warn the projection of his father when Macnair, who had gotten much closer, swung his axe horizontally at James from the side. Since the projector pensieve had no sound it was very odd to see James Potter roar in pain as his left arm was severed, just above the elbow, but not to hear the scream. Before Macnair could get another shot in

at James or Sirius, Frank came charging to the rescue, physically tackling the larger Death Eater to the ground before pulling a fist back. Both boys watched in amazement as some of the tarmac moulded itself around Frank's fist, coating it and making his punch to Macnair's jaw even more powerful. Harry, despite seeing his father lose an arm, felt he had to make the observation,

"So that's why Macnair doesn't have that many teeth left..." he muttered to himself before explaining that Macnair had been Buckbeak's would-be executioner. Neville smiled, slightly happy at hearing the news. Sirius pulled himself out of his funk long enough to chuckle weakly,

"If there was one person you didn't want to get into a fist-fight with..." he smiled at Neville, "It was Frank. He had one hell of a left hook."

The memory ended there, with James on the ground in pain, Sirius hovering over him with a devastated expression and Frank Longbottom pulling back to deliver another crushing punch. Harry looked up, slightly alarmed,

"What happened after that?" he asked quietly, he felt he needed to know what had happened after his father lost his arm. Sirius sighed a little, deflating visibly,

"After that Dumbledore and the rest of the Order showed up. Scared the Death Eaters away." He closed his eyes tight, "James got his arm regrown because the cut was clean... no dark magic or anything."

Remus patted his friend on the shoulder before Sirius quietly left the room. He sighed as he turned to the two concerned boys,

"You have to understand..." he rubbed tiredly at his eyes, "Sirius still hasn't forgiven himself for that. And he feels that it was his fault. In a certain light... it is."

Harry frowned a little,

"But surely it was Macnair who did it..." he shrugged, "So the blame is on him right?"

Remus nodded,

"Somewhat." He admitted before shaking his head, growing frustrated, "But Sirius was in danger because of the way he fights. He fights as if a duel to the death is an extension of pranking! That man is the best friend I have but his style of fighting will get him killed one day..."

Standing, Remus moved towards the backdoor,

"Lesson over." He declared firmly, "I'll send over the tutor tomorrow."

In front of Harry stood a man that positively radiated danger, danger of a particularly violent and bloody death.

This effect was only partially achieved through his physical appearance. He was quite tall, not overly so but enough to stand a good few inches above Harry. His hair was short and rather messy, not unlike Harry's own, in a soft chestnut brown colour. After those two observations the sight of the man brought shivers to his spine.

He was dressed in a muggle business suit, a pair of crisp black trousers, a black jacket that was absolutely spotless and a white dress shirt. The dress shirt however had a large, red, stain in the centre of it. It was obviously blood but the casual way the man stood assured Harry that he knew of its presence on his shirt and obviously didn't care. This lead Harry to believe that it wasn't his blood.

The man's facial structure suggested that the man should be handsome and to a degree he did appear to be but there were several things that were just off about his face. Of course the small scar on his chin was different but that only served to make him somewhat distinguished. No, what robbed his face of its natural good looks were two things.

One; his skin was harsh, as if wind beaten or perhaps blasted with sand for a while. Parts of it were covered by the man's stubble but that just drew attention to how the skin across his high and defined cheek bones even looked as if it would be harsh to the touch.

Two; his eyes were dulled. They were an incredibly vibrant cobalt blue that seemed at once to outshine even Dumbledore's and yet still seem so incredibly dulled, as if there was another layer dampening their vibrancy. At once Harry understood why they were dulled. It was the contrast to Dumbledore's eyes that told him. Where the Headmaster's eyes twinkled with a kind of childish innocence that had not been lost despite what he'd seen, this man's eyes were dull because he had seen things that had taken even the scrap of innocence that people took from their childhood and brought with them into adulthood.

The only other thing that made the man seem dangerous was a feeling that Harry got from simply looking at him. It wasn't strong like a dementor's effect but the sensation was not completely apart from the frosty aura of the prison guards. It was like the wolf inside Harry had smelt something about the man because it made his animal part, in instincts he had taken as an Animagus; want to back away with its tail between its legs.

The man smiled, his teeth all perfect and white, and waved Harry into the study fully, to sit down beside a nervous looking Neville and a twitchy Daphne. Harry attempted a smile at the man and sat down between his two friends. The man nodded, mostly to himself it would appear, and sat back on the edge of the main desk in the study,

"My name is not Cobalt Smith." He told them with a little hint of amusement in his voice, "But I'm not going to tell you my name so Cobalt Smith is as good as any. Now..."

He paused to give them each a piercing stare in turn, as if he was weighing them with his eyes. One by one he stared into their eyes. Neville shuddered. Harry fidgeted a little. Daphne's hand twitched as if she was reaching for her wand. The man, 'Cobalt', smiled at them once again,

"Which one of you can tell me why I'm here?" he asked brightly, "Any ideas?"

Harry answered, his hand now very close to where his wand rested in his left pocket,

"Because you are going to be our tutor in some subject?" he half-asked, half-answered. 'Cobalt' shrugged at his half-answer,

"Sort of." He agreed lightly, "But that's what I'm going to be doing here. Tell me why I'm here."

Neville frowned deeply but said nothing while Daphne seemed to engage the Slytherin cunning she obviously possessed,

"You're here..." she paused as if waiting for permission to speak, which she took from Cobalt's encouraging smile, "Because you're being paid to be here."

He grinned widely, an expression that seemed entirely out of place on this man, this man that had Harry's lupine instincts screaming at him to run away,

"Right you are Miss Greengrass!" he announced brightly, pointing at Harry and Neville with a smirk, "And that's why Slytherin is the best house at Hogwarts. Gryffindors, Ravenclaws and Hufflepuffs all ask questions... but Slytherins ask the right questions. Now we've established that I've been paid to be here we can establish something..."

Cobalt's easy smile disappeared in an instant and his casual demeanour vanished along with it. Suddenly his entire body seemed to be like a spring, coiling itself up for a more explosive finish. His grin had turned into a thin frown. It took almost all of Harry's willpower to crush the lupine urge to run like hell. Glancing at Neville, and seeing the boy twitch slightly, he knew that he wasn't the only one to feel this way. Cobalt leant forwards slightly,

"It is my job to teach you children the most important lesson you can learn in life..." he snarled, drawing a knife from inside his jacket with exaggerated slowness, "To kill."

Neville swallowed, with an audible gulp,

"Why are you teaching us to kill?" he frowned slightly as some of the confidence from before the meeting came back, "It's easy to kill right? A reductor curse to the chest can kill someone. A spell designed for cutting threads can be used to kill if you power it enough."

Cobalt turned to Neville, his dull eyes hard and cold,

"Until you have killed a man you do not know what it means to kill." He narrowed his eyes until they were slits, slivers of ice cold blue, "Until you've felt the blood on your hands you do not know what it means to kill."

When Neville shied away from him, Cobalt sat upright once again,

"Most of what I shall teach you is mental." He told them as he stood from the desk and began to pace in front of them, looking at his feet the whole time, "It will make it easier for you when you do eventually take a life. It won't take the pain away however."

He glanced at them,

"The pain you will feel..." he paused, closing his eyes as if preparing to deliver a great and terrible truth, which he was, "Is the pain of abandoning a delusion. The delusion is meaning. There is no higher purpose. There are no gods. No arbiters of right and wrong."

Looking at them again he gauged their reactions. Neville's disgust at the thought that life was meaningless. Daphne's attempts to be detached from the feeling of helplessness that came from the idea. And then there was Harry. Harry who had watched a boy only a little older than himself die. And that was it. Cedric Diggory had just... died. There were no angels, no one to carry the boy to a better place. So when Cobalt looked into Harry's eyes he saw the flickering of understanding, amid a sea of sadness at the lack of meaning,

"I don't ask you to like reality." He told them as he continued to pace, "I only ask you to be strong enough to face it. There is nothing beyond this. There is no essential good in living. Life is nothing but a competition. We live because to die is to lose. And to lose is an insult. We do anything to avoid that insult. The ends don't justify the means. The means don't justify the ends. There is no one to justify to. There is no justification. There is no justice."

Cobalt paused here and stared up at the ceiling in thought for a moment. After a few seconds he turned to the trio, who were all still captivated by his lecture. He turned to face them,

"Do you know how many people I've killed?" he asked them quietly. One by one they shook their heads. Cobalt shrugged a little, "Me neither. I used to..."

He paused again, looking almost sad for a moment, before he schooled his features into a neutral mask,

"I remembered the name of every person I killed outside of an honour duel." He frowned, "Then it was too many. I just remembered the number. Then I remembered only the innocents. Then I forgot even that. Do you know what punishments I've endured for my crimes? For my sins?"

Glaring at each of the children in turn he snarled,

"None." He spat at the floor, "I am proof of the absurdity of men's most treasured abstractions. A just universe wouldn't tolerate my existence."

He stopped pacing finally; standing in front of the desk where he'd started his pacing,

"You must abandon the notion that the universe is good. You must abandon the idea that right and wrong exist. And when you have finally detached yourself entirely from that insufferably stupid part of the human condition..." he looked directly into Harry's eyes, a sadness etched into his dull blue eyes, "You will be able to kill without a thought. Because you will realise that when you kill you take nothing of value."

Cobalt kept his eyes locked with Harry's for a few moments longer before he blinked and clapped his hands, his casually happy act back on in full force,

"Now let's teach you kids some fucking horrible spells!" he announced as if he were giving them a delightful present, "Now let's start with an acid spell... very nasty one..."

Christmas Day passed at Number 12 with a lot of festive cheer and happiness. Harry and Daphne had been pushed under the mistletoe by Sirius and, thanks to a couple of 'festive' glasses of firewhiskey from Sirius, spent about twenty minutes snogging. Of course when

Susan and Hannah had come through and heard of this, Susan had dragged Harry back to the mistletoe for her our make-out session.

The food had been great in abundance and quality, mainly due to the fact that Kreacher had been ordered to accept help from Dobby so that there was no chance he could poison them all as he'd admitted to thinking of. Both Susan and Hannah had asked their parents if they could stay over with Harry and his friends and they'd agreed after Remus had pretended to be Harry's godfather so that the parents didn't see Sirius and immediately call the Aurors.

They'd shown them the pensieve memories and shared with them the lessons Remus and Sirius had given them on the different styles of Duelling. Hannah and Susan had both found it very interesting and listened to every word while watching the memories closely. Of course when James Potter's projection lost an arm, Susan had curled up into Harry's side to comfort him. This, of course, caused Daphne to cuddle up against his other side.

On Boxing Day the five teenagers moved as one into the study, where five high backed chairs had been set up in a line with a pen and notepad in each seat. They were supposed to be meeting their other tutor today but he didn't appear to be in the study. Keeping their collective guard up, the entire group sat down and tried to spot the new tutor. Something at the back of Harry mind growled that they were not alone in the room and he could see that Neville felt the same way. The animals in their minds could feel another presence in the room and they didn't like it.

Whatever they had been expecting, what happened next was not it.

The air in front of the desk shimmered a few different colours before being drawn downwards towards the floor. Just above the floor the coloured specs of air began to join together rapidly, quickly merging into a black line. Harry watched in utter fascination as the particles of air began to merge and grow upwards.

First into two feet.

Then two leg.

Then the legs joined into a hip.

Rapidly the air around them was rushing to the front of the desk and materialising into a person. After only a few minutes a man stood in front of the desk, fully clothed in dress robes with a strange black overcoat with silver fastenings over the top. It took Harry a few minutes to recognise it as a gothic take on a formal military coat.

The man himself was utterly different from the other tutor, Cobalt, in almost every way. His skin was pale but smooth, no facial scarring and not harsh-looking cheeks. Black hair was naturally spiked and he held himself with a casual air of confidence. When he opened his eyes they were the same colour as the previous tutor, cobalt blue, but they were not dulled in any way. They might not have had the twinkle of Dumbledore's eyes but they were bright and vibrant. The smile was comforting on this man whereas it had been frightening on Cobalt,

"Hello kids." He greeted them with a smirked a slightly sarcastic wave of his hand, "My name is Richard Romain and I'm going to be tutoring you in some advanced transfiguration. Any questions so far?"

Susan raised a hand and Richard nodded to her with a dazzling smile,

"Um..." Susan paused for a moment before continuing, "Not to be offensive... but you're voice sounds strange. Where are you from?"

Richard chuckled, a light and friendly sound,

"Oh you caught my accent did you?" he smirked a little before shrugging, "I'm originally from Germany but I've spent a lot of time in Romania and Russia. Apparently my English isn't as good fluent and natural as my Russian... oh well! Anything else?"

Harry frowned a little before raising his hand, which got him a roll of the eyes and a nod from the friendly German,

"You're only going to be tutoring us for a few days right?" at the man's nod, Harry continued, "So how can you teach us advanced transfiguration and charms in that time?"

Richard scoffed at the question,

"Well I'm only going to be teaching you two spells of course." He rolled his eyes, "It'd be stupid to try and teach you the advanced parts of two of the largest branches of magic in four days."

Daphne looked thoughtful for a moment,

"What spells will you be teaching us?" she asked politely. Richard shrugged a little,

"How to conjure a marble block." He demonstrated, conjuring a line of solid marble in the air with a casual wave of his wand, "Oh and how to animate an inanimate object with the compulsion to attack weaved into the spell."

Dispelling the marble block to better maintain eye contact with his young charges, Richard sat down on the edge of the desk in front of them. He looked straight into Harry's eyes for a few moments before sighing, rubbing his eyes tiredly,

"I see Cobalt has already made his 'life is nothing' speech..." he muttered, loud enough for the teens to hear him as he thought aloud to himself. Daphne raised an eyebrow,

"Do you know him?" she asked before she could curb her curiosity. Just as she was about to take it back, Richard answered,

"Know him?" he scoffed, "I worked with the guy for about four years. Had to put up with that 'life is nothing' crap for four years... kinda makes you feel like crap doesn't it?"

Harry frowned,

"You disagree with what he said?" he asked, curious because he'd understood, on some level, what Cobalt had been saying. When he'd been about to die in the graveyard there was no life flashing before his eyes. And when Cedric had died nothing significant had happened. Richard frowned a little as he contemplated his answer. Finally he held up a hand to show them his wedding ring,

"You see this?" he twisted the ring idly around his finger, "I've been married for less than a year. And already I know that there's more to life than just dying. Cobalt might have forgotten, might have numbed himself to the feeling, but there is more to life because of the people

in it. I love my wife with my heart and my soul. I love my daughter with my heart and soul. And when our second child is born I shall love it with my heart and my soul. If I looked no further than my family I would know that life is not empty as Cobalt would have us believe."

He smiled warmly at them all, his happiness and love obvious in the way the smile reached his eyes,

"The only empty life is one spent alone." He shrugged happily, "As long as you have someone in your life that cares for you... then your life is never meaningless."

Richard clapped loudly,

"Alright then!" he grinned, "Let's start on conjuring! Now here's how we're going to start..."

Harry fidgeted as Daphne and Susan fussed over him and his dress robes, which looked and fitted suspiciously like the tuxedo he'd expressed a great amount of hatred for. Right now Susan was tying what appeared to be a tie but Daphne had been most insistent that it was actually a cravat.

Whatever the hell one of those was.

Right now Daphne was shining his shoes, making them shine so much that he was beginning to believe they were white and not black purely because of the amount of shine they now had. And Susan's tying of the tie, or cravat, or whatever it was, was really starting to tighten the already uncomfortably stiff collar of his shirt. He frowned at Susan, who smiled prettily and kissed him lightly on the lips, which caused him to give a small smile despite his lack of breathing space with the cravat tied up in its 'ruffley' way,

"Oh stop fussing!" Susan scolded him playfully with a little giggle, "You look very handsome!"

Harry scowled playfully at her and held his arms out wide to look down at himself. He was dressed in a fine pair of light black trousers, an unnaturally white and stiff dress shirt and a very silky waistcoat. It was entirely too restrictive. He pouted,

"But it makes breathing hard!" he whined but with what he felt to be a valid point, "And I really think it's too much. I mean why couldn't I just wear my dress robes? You know the green ones."

Daphne spoke up from where she seemed intent of polishing his shoes out of existence,

"Unacceptable on two counts." She spoke firmly but with a small smirk, "First is simple. You've already worn them to a function once, it's not proper for you to wear the same thing twice."

Harry rolled his eyes with his own smirk,

"I thought that rule was only for women and their dresses?" he teased, which earned him a smack to the chest from Susan, "Ow."

Continuing, Daphne finally passed him his now impossibly shiny shoes,

"Second is just as simple." She smiled brightly at him, "You're the first one of the Seven to be publically acknowledged! The public, and the Wizengamot, must see you as the pinnacle of everything. Unfortunately for you that means fashion as well as political power."

Harry pouted again,

"Oh that's just my luck..." he sighed, his acting given away by the smirk he couldn't hide, "Why must there be draw-backs to having an amazingly abundant inheritance? Oh woe is me..."

Susan hit him in the chest again with her own smirk,

"Stop you're whining!" she told him firmly before winking, "You've just had two very attractive girls dress you... how's that a bad thing?"

Blushing slightly, Harry coughed awkwardly,

"Well suggesting that you 'get me out of those clothes'..." he quoted with a small smirk, "Was just a tad misleading."

Daphne stuck her tongue out at him in an uncharacteristic display of childishness,

"Oh get over it..." she winked at him as well, "We made sure you stayed in your boxers for quite a long time. We had our fun."

Sighing, and deciding that now was an excellent time to change the subject before he couldn't stop blushing, Harry nodded towards the door, where the long jacket-overcoat hybrid piece of clothing was hung up. He'd refused to call it anything but, despite the insistence of Daphne,

"Do I have to put that on yet?" he asked with a barely concealed grimace, "This is already very restrictive as it is..."

Susan and Daphne shared a look before nodding to each other. Susan pushed Harry down onto the edge of the room's bed, where he sat, more than a little confused. With a sly smile, the Hufflepuff beauty sat down on his left knee, leading in to coo softly in his left ear. Just as his brain was beginning to become idle, Daphne slithered across the room to slide onto his right leg like the Slytherin that she was, also cooing in his right ear. With this double effect, Harry's eyes widened before his brain began to turn to mush and he moaned quietly. Daphne pouted cutely, grinding her crotch onto his right leg,

"Would you wear it for me?" she asked cutely, still pouting even as she slide herself up and down his upper leg. He opened his mouth to stutter out a reply and Susan took his chin and turned his head to face her,

"Would you wear it for the both of us?" the sly Hufflepuff asked, pouting just as cutely as she rolled her hips on his left leg. He tried to stutter out a reply but all that came out was a low, moan-like, sound so he just nodded mutely. Susan and Daphne shared an impish look before kissing his cheeks simultaneously, before almost jumping away from him with happy grins,

"Thanks Harry!" they said in unison as they quickly left the room.

It took Harry ten minutes to break out of his stupor and realise he'd been had.

"Damn you voluptuous witches!"

Harry and Neville stood beside the fireplace in the main living room of Number 12, staring at each other in slight dismay. Harry was dismayed that Neville was dressed in a light blue navy frockcoat, complete with silky waistcoat, stuffy shirt and cravat. Neville was dismayed that Harry was dressed in the same thing except his frockcoat was a light black colour instead. Both boys shook their heads sadly and turned to their female companions.

Hannah had decided to show her Hufflepuff colours tonight so her dress was a flowing number in a tasteful shade of yellow. How on earth Hannah had managed to find a yellow dress that didn't make her look at least somewhat like a banana was beyond Harry but he guessed it might have something to do with the fact that the dress was closer to gold than it was to Hufflepuff yellow. But the thought was there.

Turning his eyes away from Hannah, whom Neville was now positively drooling over, Harry looked at Susan and swallowed hard to rid his throat of the lump that had formed of its own accord. She was wearing a silver dress, a ball gown of some kind but it was wrapped around her form a lot more than any ball gown Harry had ever heard of. Her perfectly busty figure...

To try and steer his thoughts away from the gutter he turned to Daphne.

This turned out to be a mistake.

Daphne was a scandal in dark green. He'd heard the term 'a scandal in red' but Daphne had captured the same effect but in deep Slytherin green. If anyone else had worn the dress it might have looked cheap on them, it ended above the knees and drew attention to her cleavage. The traditional members of the Wizengamot that were attending this New Year's Eve ball were sure to have heart attacks at seeing Daphne and Susan. Smiling widely, Harry took Susan's left hand and Daphne's right before kissing them both,

"My ladies..." he smiled wide, unable to find any properly sugar coated words that he was supposed to say as their escort, "You two are absolutely stunning. I'll have to make sure no one tries to steal you away!"

His rather nervous attempt at a joke seemed to have broken the tension however, as both Susan and Daphne giggled lightly behind their hands. Harry turned towards the green flames of the fireplace with both elbows out. Susan and Daphne each threaded an arm through to hang on his arms. This situation, naturally, made Harry grin widely at Neville, who was grinning at having Hannah on his arm. Well when the press asked why he'd chosen to escort both Susan and Daphne he could tell them truthfully that he'd known that if he did appear with them on his arms he would be the most envied wizard there. Without breaking hold the three of them stepped into the abnormally large fireplace,

"Ministry of Magic, Atrium!" Harry called out clearly as he and his lovely ladies were whisked away through the green flames of the Floo network. Not a second later they stepped out, as one, into the black tiled Atrium of the Ministry of Magic, arriving amid a sea of other party goers, all of whom were moving towards what appeared to be a check point. The fireplace to the right of them flamed and Neville and Hannah stepped out, all smiles, to stand in line beside them. Neville frowned slightly,

"I wonder why there's a check point for a Wizengamot New Year's Eve party?" he wondered aloud, "After all, they don't acknowledge the return of Voldemort."

Daphne shrugged a little and took it upon herself to be the voice of reason,

"Probably just being careful anyway." She reasoned with a smile, "The most powerful people in all of Great Britain are going to be here tonight after all."

Not particularly caring about the check point, Harry shrugged,

"Whatever helps them sleep at night." He grinned, "I just want to have time to dance with both of my special ladies."

Her cheeks flushed slightly pink, Susan slapped his arm playfully,

"Oh shush you!" she scolded him playfully, "Otherwise you'll get a big head."

Neville chuckled,

"Too late!" he announced happily, "You've already given him a big head by making sure he's the only wizard with two ladies on his arms!"

Rolling his eyes, Harry was about to respond when the last couple in front of them went through the check point and the pair of Aurors at this particular check point saw who he was. Their eyes widened instantly and they drew their wands, pointing them at him as he frowned in confusion,

"It's him!" cried one of the Aurors, "It's him! We've got Potter!"

This seemed to set off a powder keg, with the remaining party goes around them panicking and screaming upon hearing the announcement. They scrambled hastily to get away from him as the group of teenagers huddled together as the world around them apparently went mad. Aurors from the other check points charged over, forming a ring of wands that trapped the teenagers. Kingsley Shacklebolt, the Auror that had argued with Umbridge the night of Harry's flight from Privet Drive, stood in front of him, his wand pointed directly at his heart,

"Lord Potter you are under arrest for the torture and murder of twenty six muggles." He announced in a booming monotone, "You are also charged with forty three uses of Unforgivable Curses. In light of this evidence you are to be arrested and held in Azkaban prison until a trial can be arranged for you."

Harry stood there, his eyes wide and his mouth hanging open slightly, as he looked around at all of the anxious Aurors. Neville was stunned but the expression was quickly turning to anger. Hannah was cowering slightly from the nearest sparking wand tips. Susan was clinging tightly to his arm while trying to shield him from view of the Aurors. Daphne was the first to move, standing in front of Harry,

"Auror Shacklebolt!" she shouted to get the full attention of the Aurors, "Let Harry swear on his magic that he didn't do it! That will prove he didn't do it!"

Shacklebolt appeared reluctant but he nodded,

"Very well..." he decided finally, "If Lord Potter can swear on his magic that the charges are false then he will only be detained for questioning under truth potion."

Everyone looked at him expectantly so Harry nodded and held his right hand over his heart to focus his magic on the vow he was about to make,

"I, Harry James Potter, do hereby swear on my magic that I did no-" he paused abruptly as his magic gave a giant heave away from his chest, making him stagger backwards in surprise, causing the twitchy Aurors to almost curse him. Harry's eyes widened. His magic didn't want to swear the oath, it was as if his magic didn't believe it was true for some reason. That his magic had somehow been involved in the torture and killing of those muggles. Glancing over Shacklebolt's shoulder he saw the visibly gleeful Minister Fudge, with a smug looking Lucius Malfoy just behind him.

Suddenly Harry realised that if he couldn't swear an oath on his magic he would be taken to Azkaban, without any mention of Veritaserum. He knew, from the smug look of the senior Malfoy and the glee of Fudge that if he ever received a trial for this it would be a show trial at best. He'd be sentenced to the Dementor's Kiss or something just as foul.

His eyes darting from side to side, Harry assessed the situation quickly and found it lacking. Greatly lacking.

He was surrounded by Aurors with itchy trigger-fingers so to speak. Without a doubt, they would all fire curses as soon as he made a move that didn't fit in perfectly with what they expected. So that meant that if he was to escape he'd need to move in such a way that they wouldn't interpret it as hostile. With the beginnings of a plan, Harry coughed harshly, as if a tickling in his chest had been what had caused him to stop his oath. Raising his hand to his mouth, to stop the cough by all appearances, he struck.

His wand, which had been hidden in its holster under his right sleeve, shot up into his hand and he jabbed it above his head even as he closed his eyes,

"LUMOS MAXIMA!" Harry roared as he shot the flare spell up, just at eye-level for an adult wizard. Cries of momentary pain and a lot of

swearing came from all sides as the Aurors were all blinded, clutching at their eyes in pain as Harry opened his eyes for the first time. Jabbing his wand quickly at one of the Aurors he growled out, "Pulso!"

The banishing charm caught the blinded Auror dead centre in the chest, sending him flying through the air into the tiled wall of the Atrium. Upon hitting the wall the Auror cried out once before sliding to the bottom of the wall, boneless. But before the man had even hit the wall, Harry was running. Not in the same direction as he'd blasted the Auror but in the opposite direction so that he wasn't clipped by any of the blind spells the still disorientated Aurors shot off in that direction.

Forgetting his magic for now, Harry sprinted as fast as he could away from the Aurors, vaulting over one of the check points as he ran towards the bank of lifts across the Atrium from him. They'd expect him to make a break for the Floo or for the telephone box of the visitor's entrance so running further into the Ministry wouldn't register with them for a few seconds. Vital seconds for Harry Potter.

As it was he'd managed to make it to the golden statue in the centre of the Atrium before the first spells were sent in the right direction. A blasting curse hit the golden statue of a house elf, the creature's pointed ears acting as great shrapnel as it exploded just to the left of Harry's ear. Knocked to the right sharply, Harry avoided the stunner that fizzled through the space his head had occupied before the explosion had rocked his head away. Stumbling only slightly, Harry resumed his sprint, this time zigzagging so that the spells had even less of a chance to catch him.

Less than a hundred yards from the lifts, one of which was open, Harry swore as a stray spell clipped his arm. Ropes appeared from where he'd been hit and attempted to grow and climb up the length of his arm. Swearing, Harry pointed his wand at his left arm,

"Diffindo!" he declared firmly, wincing as the cutting curse cut through both the robe spell and the skin on the back of his left forearm. Staggering more now, Harry heard the steps of the Aurors behind him and their angry shouts. Lurching forwards desperately, Harry dove into the open lift, hitting the controls with a weak banishing charm to get the lift moving in any direction. The doors closed slowly but the one spell they allowed in splashed harmlessly

against the wall behind him. As the mechanical elements of the lift ground on, Harry slumped against the wall and closed his eyes.

What the hell was he doing?

He was a member of the Seven! He could rewrite the laws so that even if he had tortured and killed those people he'd be able to get away with it! He had the power to force a vote of not guilty!

But he couldn't bring himself to do it.

It was constitutionally his right but he just couldn't bring himself to do it. He couldn't bring himself to use his rights as a member of the Seven and become a legal dictator. Fudge may be an incompetent, corrupt, disgusting man but he was a democratically elected incompetent, corrupt and disgusting man. Harry?

Harry was born with the right blood in his veins and apparently that gave him the legal right to rule without consulting the wishes of the people in any way shape or form. Hell, if he had the mind he could even take full control from the Wizengamot, a group of people who had been born with slightly lesser blood than his own. But even the Wizengamot was somewhat representative of the people. Sure it was almost entirely representing the rich and the pureblooded but it still had more of a democratic feel than Harry's power to simply take full control of every decision made in the country.

But sitting against a wall, very slowly bleeding out from a self-inflicted gash on the back of his left forearm was not how he was going to die. Gripping his wand tightly, Harry made the circular motion with his wand,

"Episkey." he muttered, visualising the wound closing. Surprisingly the spell worked first time and his cut slowly began to seal before completely vanishing, leaving only quickly drying blood. Now sure that he wasn't going to die a stupid, or at least self-inflicted, death, Harry stood up and checked the control panel for the lift. He swore as he saw the dozen spider-web cracks running throughout the golden panel. He must have put more power into the banishing charm in his panic. So now he was hurtling towards an unknown section of the Ministry of Magic with Aurors on his tail. Deciding that if stupidity had gotten him into this situation, it might be able to get him out of it, Harry pulled the doors of the lift open to see the

entrances to several sections of the Ministry passing by at a much more sedate pace than the sounds of the lift indicated. Cursing his ability to find increasingly stupid solutions to stupid problems, Harry pointed his wand at the lift itself and concentrated, "Aresto Momentum."

The effect was instantaneous.

The lift came to a screeching halt at the next floor and Harry fell out onto this new section of the Ministry. His concentration, the spell broke and the lift continued its random movement through the Ministry, the Aurors still following it apparently. Harry got to his feet and looked around quickly, his wand at the ready. He was alone in an area of the Ministry he'd never been to before. Moving cautiously over to the reception desk for this area of the Ministry he frowned when he read the sign.

Department for the Regulation and Control of Magical Creatures

This was the place that had sentenced Buckbeak to death for the attack on Draco Malfoy during his first Care of Magical Creatures lesson with Hagrid. He frowned as he looked over to the left corridor, one that was noted to lead towards the 'Beast' section of the department. If he was a gambling man he'd put money on that subsection being responsible for the decision. Shaking his head to clear it of such thoughts he quickly made his way into the Beast section of the department, checking and double checking every darkened corner as he went. Reaching the end of the hall he slipped into the first room he saw.

Checking the room over quickly, Harry noticed that it looked like a regular office area of a regular office block. All of the desks had in trays, out trays and mountains of paperwork that had simply been left for New Year's Day or later. The one defining feature of the room was that the far wall was made entirely of glass. Frowning, Harry cautiously made his way over to the giant window. He was shocked to find that this was one of the many huge windows that over-looked the Atrium. Marvelling at his good luck at finding a hiding place with such a good vantage point, Harry looked down at the Atrium and noticed that all of the people were captivated by a pale figure standing on a stage in the centre of the huge Atrium. Before Harry could make out the figure's identity, the door to the room opened.

Eyes wide, Harry spun on the spot, his wand raised, to face the Aurors that were obviously going to be swarming into the room.

But there were no Aurors.

No, what was in the doorway was much, much, worse than a few Aurors.

Walden Macnair was stood in the doorway, his giant executioner's axe resting lazily on his right shoulder. The man had aged well since the projected memory of him. Just like in the memory, Walden seemed to take offense at the idea of wearing a shirt and so was wearing only a tattered black overcoat and a pair of black leather trousers. Harry, unable to stop himself, spoke the first thing that came to mind,

"You look like a gimp." He announced with a frown and a raised eyebrow. Walden chuckled darkly at the comment, idly scratching his stomach muscles,

"Yeah..." he chuckled again, "Yeah I get that a lot."

Harry frowned a little,

"What are you doing here anyway?" he asked before frowning deeper, "I realise you work here but don't murdering gimps take a holiday over Christmas and New Year?"

Walden chuckled obligingly again with a sad shake of his head,

"You really are like your father. He was a funny one too." He replied casually before shrugging, "Lucius and the Dark Lord wanted me to be here today. Said I'd get my chance to put you down while my Lord's plan goes off without a hitch downstairs in the Atrium."

Harry scowled at the man, gripping his wand tighter,

"You cut off my father's arm..." he muttered darkly, his wand's tip sparking a deep red. Macnair blinked in surprise before grinning, all sharp, white, teeth,

"You've seen my work!" he cried, as if happy that someone had 'appreciated' his work, "I must say though... it wasn't my best work. I

was hoping to cleave the guy in two but you got to take the good with the bad I guess. They can't all be perfect hits."

Harry backed up until he had his back against the glass, pointing his wand menacingly at Macnair as the executioner began to stalk forwards,

"You don't have to do this Macnair..." Harry told him gravely, "Walk away and you can live!"

Macnair stood in front of Harry by only about a couple of metres, a distance easily crossed by the giant axe that Macnair had lofted above his head,

"Oh you are a funny one!" he replied gleefully before he grinned his shark-like grin, "I enjoy cutting the funny ones in half!"

Harry gritted his teeth,

"You asked for it..." he warned before his eyes glowed with a sudden build-up of magic, "Accio desk."

Macnair frowned in confusion,

"Ac-?" he began but was cut off sharply when the nearest desk slammed into his back at high speeds. Harry tried to dive out of the way but as the desk slammed towards the fragile glass, the executioner grabbed onto Harry's frockcoat in an attempt to keep himself from falling as the table propelled him out the window towards the Atrium floor. Harry had enough time to register that Macnair was clinging to his frockcoat before he was pulled out of the window with him, giving him enough time to organise a single thought before he was yanked out of the window,

"Shit."

Mere moments after the lifts doors shut on the escaping Harry Potter, the Ministry of Magic's Atrium began to go into complete lock-down. Everyone present felt a tingling sensation run up their spines as wards against magic travel went up. One by one, heavy metal grates fell into place in front of the fireplaces, shutting off the Floo Network entirely. After the Aurors followed the escaping Lord in their own lift, the same type of heavy grates fell in front of the lifts to keep them

from being used. This total lock-down naturally scared a lot of the party goers and Minister Fudge took this chance to solidify his image as a man who took charge in tough times. Standing upon a stool that his faithful underling, Weatherby or something like that, had brought for him, Minister Fudge cast the Sonorus charm on himself,

"Now please remain calm!" he advised the crowd, gaining their attention immediately, "The Ministry is going into lock-down in order to keep the convict, Harry Potter, from escaping the punishment he so richly deserves."

"He's not a convict yet!" cried a voice from the back on the crowd, annoying Fudge to no end that someone dared to contradict him,

"I assure you sir that this man is a dangerous criminal!" he told them, turning a little purple at being questioned by a crowd of people that had been panicky and easy to control not moments ago, "You saw how he wasn't able to sweat a magically binding oath of his innocence!"

Another shout came from another side of the crowd,

"But that just shows that the boy's magic was somehow involved!" came a woman's voice this time, "How do we know he wasn't under the Imperious Curse?"

To Fudge's general shock and dismay there was a general mutter of agreement through the crowd at this. Before he could begin to get a hold of the situation again the crowd started up again,

"There are even ways to mimic other people's magical signatures!" a man argued, "Is it so far-fetched to believe that you can use other people's magic if you can disguise your own to be the same?"

There was another general murmur in favour of the idea. Fudge opened his mouth to speak but once again the crowd began to argue its case,

"There are even some Dark rituals that can leech a person's magical core!" Announced Lord Davis, a neutral lord known for his knowledge of both Dark and Light magic, "Someone could have leeches Lord Potter's magical core and used it to create a core that was identical to that of Lord Potter! That way a magically binding

oath could not be sworn assuring Lord Potter's innocence because in a way his magic did do the crimes!

Fudge scoffed loudly at the idea, the sound amplified tenfold by his charm,

"Oh please Lord Davis!" he tried to pass it along as if Lord Davis' idea was laughable, "And who, pray tell, would have the necessary Dark Arts skills and powers to perform such a ritual or spell?"

There was silence for a moment before Lord Davis spoke up again,

"Lord Voldemort." He announced firmly, causing the entire crowd to gasp and Fudge to begin to purple in the face again, "Minister it makes sense! Lord Potter has long been known for his honourable stance against harsh anti-muggle attitudes. His mother was a muggleborn for Merlin's sake! It makes sense Minister. If Voldemort really has returned then he'd need to discredit Lord Potter's revelation until he was ready to strike. Minister... we have to seriously consider the idea that Voldemort has returned as Lord Potter and Headmaster Dumbledore have warned us."

The crowd began to mutter amongst itself and many were sounding like positive responses to Lord Davis' argument. Fudge, purple in the face now, exploded,

"HE'S NOT BACK!" he shouted with the aid of the charm, "HE CAN'T BE BACK!"

The crowd flinched at the sheer volume of the shout as it was amplified by the Sonorus charm. Lord Davis looked like he was about to reply but stopped when the sound of a single person clapping echoed ominously throughout the Atrium. Everyone looked around for the source and they didn't have to look too far. Standing on the shoulders of the golden wizard statue, a deathly pale Harry Potter was clapping mockingly slowly, his mouth twisted up into a cruel smirk,

"Well done! Well done!" he congratulated Lord Davis, "You, Lord Davis, truly are one of the greatest scholars of our age. Truly, a magnificent deduction."

Fudge pointed at the pale teenager, who was noticeably several shades whiter than he apparently had been not five minutes ago,

"AURORS!" he cried loudly, "Arrest him!"

For a few seconds nothing happened and Fudge looked behind him to where his Auror bodyguards had been waiting along with his supporter, Lucius Malfoy. But now Lucius Malfoy for nowhere to be seen and the twelve Aurors assigned to the Minister's protection were slumped against one another to give the impression that they were still upright under their own power. As the few subtle charms came undone, all twelve of the Aurors fell to the floor, dead. The pale Potter laughed harshly, turning everyone's attention back to him once the women had finished screaming at seeing the dead Aurors,

"Oh I'm afraid they're quite incapacitated." He taunted Fudge as he waved his wand in a giant wave, his eyes glowing an unholy green. The statues he'd been standing on not seconds ago began to shift and rearrange themselves into a simple wooden stage, which the pale teen stood in the centre of. He chuckled lightly, as if this was all pleasantly amusing. Fudge wasn't aware that he'd dropped the Sonorus charm until he spoke,

"How did you get there...?" he asked, bewildered, "We saw you escape into a lift... I saw you run away!"

The pale Potter chuckled lightly at this and waved a hand casually in the direction of Lord Davis,

"Lord Davis has given you the correct answer already Minister." He replied with a grin that only widened as the colour drained from Fudge's face, "So not only have you sent away my 'better' half but you've sent thirty Aurors after him. Taking their protection away from you."

The teenager pointed his wand, a black wand and not the light holly of the Lord Potter who'd just been chased away by Aurors, at Fudge,

"It appears that our society has reached the edge!" he announced to his captive audience, "Fourteen years ago, that man declared the age of innocence reborn! And even though the evidence was staring you in the face you believe the lie."

He began to pace up and down on the stage,

"My generation is the first born into lies of peace and yet willing to fight a war you insist does not exist." He scowled at Fudge, "Some have fought and died... you have allowed others to be butchered for a price that they themselves don't care about and will never understand."

He gestured to himself,

"I myself am a bad man. But am beleaguered by the selfish face of a kind of man that is not mankind." He spat at the base of the stage, "Distrust in information, fundamentalism of opinion, catastrophic boredom and a fanatical devotion to that which does not matter."

With a savage wave of his wand the lower level windows began to shatter and explode outwards towards the centre of the Atrium. The crowd of party goers screamed and Fudge whimpered. The pale teen shot a blasting curse that carved up the tiles in front of Fudge and made him jump back in fear,

"Where is your glory now, people? Where are your Gods and politicians? Where is your shame and salvation? You rage for no reason because you have no reason!" he shouted to the crowd as he continued to blast chunks out of the floor around them, "What have you ever fought for? What have you ever bled for? The face of the earth is scarred with the walking dead! The age of the innocence is a living virus!"

The teen jabbed his wand in a series of complicated movements and a stream of unholy fire burst force from the tip. Once again the crowd screamed, this time in sheer terror as the pale teen called forth fiendfyre in the shape of an unstoppable dragon,

"This is the future you have created! This is the world you have set ablaze! All your lies are coming true... All freedom is lost!" he twirled his wand dramatically and the dragon flew in circles around the crowd, pinning them in, "ALL! HOPE! IS! GONE!"

The sound of smashing glass filled the Atrium again but this time even the pale teenager looked surprised at the sound. As one, everyone in the Atrium turned to look up at a larger, third story,

window as it shattered outwards. People screamed as two figures fell through the window, the smaller figure managing to turn them in the air so that the larger figure was the first to land. With a sickening 'Crunch!', the larger figure hit the ground with his neck at an odd angle. The smaller figure, now wobbling to his feet, shook his head of unruly black hair. The pale Potter scowled,

"Well fuck..." he held his wand tightly, "You weren't supposed to be here anymore... Harry."

Harry groaned a little as he shakily stood up, shaking his head as he looked down at the broken body of Walden Macnair. His neck was at an impossible angle so Harry assumed he was dead. Wobbling every step of the way, Harry stepped off of Macnair,

"Well Macnair... you were a shitty person." He told the corpse as he shook some glass out of his hair, "But you make a decent crash mat."

Pulling a stubborn piece of glass out of his hair, Harry looked up for the first time since he'd landed. He was in the Atrium again and everyone was staring at him, including a very pale person standing on a wooden stage where the golden statues had been not five minutes before. Harry swore colourfully. He'd completely forgotten that he was trying to get away from the Atrium in his rush to escape Macnair. Taking a few seconds to take the scene in front of him in his eyes widened as he noticed that the crowd of party goers and ministry officials was penned in by a large amount of fiendfyre. He took a step forwards and then instantly jumped back to avoid the blasting curse, which instead tore up the tiled floor in front of him. His attention snapped to the pale figure on the platform and his eyes widened even more,

"What the..." he pointed accusingly at the figure, "You're me! What the hell are you doing, being me?"

The pale Potter, for he was obviously some form of copy, rolled his eyes as he jumped down from the stage,

"Brilliant as always Harry." The man taunted, his voice exactly the same as Harry's, "I suppose next you'll want to hear why I've been made an exact copy of you?"

Harry paused for a few seconds before nodding a little,

"Actually... yes, that would be helpful." He decided honestly. The copy slapped his palm to his forehead,

"Bloody hell... is it too much to ask that you'd have heard Lord Davis' excellent deduction?" he sighed loudly, "Evidently so. Alright. Basics. I'm an exact copy of you made from a sample of your flesh..."

"My arm!" Harry deduced, his eyes glowing with rage, "Oh I am going to kill Snape for this!"

The copy waved his remarks away,

"Shush you." He demanded childishly, "So he gave the arm to Voldemort. Voldemort used it to form me a body that also had a link to your magical core. So you couldn't swear on your magic because technically we use the same magical core, kinda like they're reflections of each other. Thus, Lord Voldemort destroys your good name and your reputation and further fractures his opposition."

Harry frowned even as he sank into a low duelling stance,

"Let me guess..." he gritted his teeth, "You're only telling me all this because you plan to kill everyone in this room... and have it blamed on me."

The copy grinned, showing that his teeth were a good deal sharper than Harry's own,

"Bingo." He turned his grin into a smirk, "And Snape thinks you're stupid..."

Noticing that some of the more competent Lords in the crowd were battling the fiendfyre with heavy water spells, Harry decided to try and stall for time at the same time as satisfying his curiosity,

"Just curious..." he frowned, "If I'm Harry Potter... and you're a copy of me... what do I call you? Junior?"

The copy groaned and face-palmed once again,

"Jesus Christ...!" he growled in annoyance, "Avery made that same fucking joke! And like I told that retarded, pirate-wannabe, it's not funny!"

Just the reaction of his copy made Harry want to laugh but he held it in and merely smirked at his aggravated double,

"Right..." he grinned as he saw his double twitch slightly, "So what do I call you? Because calling you copy or double is going to get annoying."

The paler of the two Potters looked thoughtful for a few moments before deciding upon something,

"It pleased Voldemort to call me Mort." He shrugged at Harry's raised eyebrow, "I guess he just wanted you dead some much he even named your copy the more socially acceptable name for death."

Harry scratched the back of his head lightly even as he kept an eye on the losing battle the Lords and Ladies were battling with the fiendfyre,

"So... Mort..." he frowned, "I notice you don't call Voldemort 'lord' like all of his simpering followers."

The copy, dubbed Mort, shrugged,

"Well he created me and everything, and I'm grateful for the chance to exist..." he smirked, "But he isn't going to give me what I want so I'm only going to follow him as far as it helps me."

Harry and Mort began to slowly circle each other, keeping quite a distance between them as they both began to contemplate firing spells mid-conversation,

"Just for curiosity again but..." Harry's eyes narrowed as he followed each of Mort's movements carefully, "What do you want that Voldemort won't give you?"

Mort grinned his savage, sharp toothed, grin,

"It's common in copies of people and animals that the copy wants to assume the full life of the original. To be the only one." His grin grew impossibly wide, "Voldemort wants to kill you himself. I want to tear your heart out, eat it and become the only Harry James Potter in this world!"

Harry paused in his circling for a second, an action mirrored by Mort. Harry shook his head,

"Dude... can't you just get a hobby or something?" Harry asked with a scowl, still trying to buy some time, "I mean... have you even tried to find something other than killing me? I've already got one deranged killer after my blood after all."

Mort rolled his eyes,

"They're still fighting the fiendfyre you know." He remarked casually before chuckling at Harry's shocked expression, "Oh come on you were looking over my shoulder with every other word. You couldn't have made it any more obvious. Why though? I only want to fight you after all."

Harry took a deep breath to calm his nerves. When he opened his eyes again he was totally calm, his magic buzzing in his ears, begging to be used. Bright blue light began to spark at his wand's tip and his muscles tensed,

"Because I know that killing you will change me." He answered coldly, "Macnair's death was an accident. I was aiming to knock the guy out of break some bones. I'll react properly to the consequences of that failure soon enough. But you?"

Mort grinned, his muscles tense as he bent slightly at the knees, looking to all the world like he'd want nothing more than to pounce,

"It'll be the first time you try to kill a human being." He acknowledged while licking at his sharpened teeth, "It changes you and you know it will."

Harry nodded sharply, as he kept his eyes locked on Mort at all times,

"It will change me." He agreed as he cautiously began the circling again. Mort scoffed as he followed Harry's lead and began to circle as well,

"It'll change you if you win. But you won't." his grin grew to the same, impossible, width as before, like something out of a demonic tale, "Voldemort has been training me in the Dark Arts since your arm was used to create me. The day after you lost it."

Harry scowled but refused to be intimidated by his opponent's obvious advantage in dangerous knowledge. Mort cackled gleefully,

"I can boil your blood inside your veins!" he boasted as they continued to circle, more out of a need to burn off nervous energy than anything else, "I can melt your bones! Burst your organs! Rip your-!"

"Reducto!" Harry called out, interrupting Mort's monologue with a well-placed curse. The curse hit the ground just to the right of Mort, where Mort was going to walk if he continued to circle. The pale double swore and threw up a quick protego shield to block the first of Harry's Bombarda blasting curses, rolling to the left to avoid the second one that destroyed his shield,

"Cathona!" Mort shouted, a sickly yellow bolt of magic flying from his wand tip at Harry. Unsure how strong the unknown curse was, Harry ducked under it as he slashed his wand in Mort's direction,

"Diffindo!" he cried; a large swathe of silver magic rushing towards Mort. Ducking under Mort's second Cathona curse, Harry rolled to the right in time to watch Mort duck under the large Diffindo curse he'd sent at him. Both Harry and Mort came up onto one knee and fired,

"Pulso!"

"Confringo!"

Harry's banishing charm hit Mort in the left shoulder, spinning the boy around like a ragdoll as it savagely connected and made his bones shake. Mort's blasting curse had gone a little lower than he'd intended, blasting the ground just inches in front of his intended

target, Harry's left foot. Shielding his eyes from the shrapnel with his left arm, Harry threw up his wand again,

"Affligo!" Harry called out forcefully, sending a distortion of the air in the shape of a ball. Mort swore as the spell hit him in the stomach, winding him and lifting him briefly off the ground as if he'd been punched hard in the stomach. Growling, Mort jabbed his wand forcefully at Harry as the latter used the break in the spell-fire as a chance to catch his breath,

"Burn Potter!" he cried out hatefully as his wand spat forth a giant fireball, which twisted to form into the shape of a bird, which cried out and dived at Harry. Thinking quickly about all that he had heard about fiendfyre, Harry acted, pointing his wand directly at the bird of cursed fire,

"Flabane!" He called out forcefully, pushing huge amounts of power into the flame-freezing charm. The fiendfyre bird flew straight at Harry but as it rushed past him the flames did not burn. Angered that his fiendfyre had not worked, Mort dispelled it quickly before Harry could attack while he was distracted by controlling it. Deciding to use one of the very short spell chains that he'd taught himself, Harry slashed his wand at Mort,

"Diffindo!" he turned the slash until a jab, "Incendio!", before twirling his wand in a circle, "Ventus!"

The spell chain worked as intended. Mort blocked the cutting curse easily enough and sneered at the weak flame charm. But before Mort could dispel or dodge the weak fireball, the Ventus charm, a charm that sent a gust of pure oxygen, hit the Incendio fireball. Harry had just enough time to watch Mort's eyes widen in panic before the fireball exploded outward, growing easily ten times its original size as the oxygen fed the fire. Before he could think about his next move, the fires split down the centre,

"Partis Temporus!" Mort had shouted; a spell that Harry had no knowledge of. Whatever kind of spell it was it pushed the flames away until they dissipated. Where the fireball had been centred not seconds ago stood Mort. His shirt had been burnt away as had the bottom of his trouser, as if he'd curled into a ball to escape the worst of the flames. But his now shirtless form revealed something that made Harry grit his teeth and growl in anger. While most of Mort's

skin was the inhumanly pale shade of white, his left arm was a healthy shade of ever so light brown. It was Harry's left arm. Mort was in no mood to let Harry stew in his anger however and he immediately began his own offensive, "Enrupto!"

Harry dived to the left as quickly as he could to avoid the pale grey curse. He'd read about the dark curse in the Black family library. It was a very nasty curse, designed to send the closest bone to the place it hit to burst straight out of the body. Needless to say if it hit him anywhere near his face or neck he wasn't going to be getting up. But Harry's dive had sent him flying into the path of one of the arrows Mort had sent at him with a quick, Arcus curse. Without time to form a shield or the ability to block, Harry took the wooden arrow to his stomach, just to the left of centre. Grunting, he continued his roll to avoid a rather dark looking cutting curse. Coming out of the roll, Harry gripped the arrow's shaft tightly and pulled sharply, pulling the arrow free of his stomach. Mort snarled and flicked his wand downwards in Harry's direction,

"Astrapicus!" he roared, still in an extraordinary rage at being burnt by Harry. Crashing sounds coming from the ceiling above him gave Harry the distinct impression that he didn't want to remain where he was. Getting to his feet quickly he dashed to the side just as a portion of the ceiling gave way to a lightning bolt, which slammed down onto the tiles that Harry had been kneeling on not seconds before. When Harry turned back to Mort, who had seemingly grown even more furious, he realized that his double had stopped playing nicely when he recognised the sickly green light building at the tip of his opponent's wand, "Avada Kedavra!"

Harry swore as waved his wand in a wide arc in front of him as the green spell hurtled towards him,

"Bracteus!" Harry shouted over the sound of rushing death, conjuring a thin sheet of solid metal which reflected the curse back at Mort. Swearing, Mort dove for cover and gave Harry the initiative again. Which he seized immediately,

"Broccium aqua!" Harry shouted, causing water to begin to rain down from the ceiling of the Atrium lightly. Not finished yet, Harry pointed his wand at the rain clouds that were now beginning to send rain down onto the Atrium floor and cast a spell he'd only watch Moody cast in a memory on environmental Dueling, "Cattacrimsi!"

The effect was immediate.

Instead of simply raining in the Atrium, the second spell had enhanced the first to such a level that the water was now rushing down like a monsoon, drenching everything and everyone to the bone in a matter of seconds. Not only that but the now torrential rain drastically reduced visibility. So where as Harry had been easily able to see Mort not a second ago, he could now only make out the vaguest of outlines. But what stood out in the rain, even with the reduced visibility, was the fiendfyre that Mort had cast initially to keep the Lords and Ladies busy. The unholy fires lit up the area around them like a beacon but it was easy to see that between the jets of water from the guests and the torrential rain that the fiendfyre was dying. Evidently Mort saw it as well because Harry heard a scream of rage before a spell he really didn't like the sound of,

"Defodio!" Mort had shouted and even now Harry could see the heavy rain being cut through by a giant swathe of black magic, a gouging curse used in carving stone from quarries if Harry wasn't mistaken. Flicking his wand upwards in front of him, Harry tried a duelist shield that one of his tutors, Cobalt, had taught him,

"Fablisa!" he called out, a blood red mist forming where his wand had flicked. The black line of the gouging curse slammed into the red mist shield before they both flickered out of existence. Harry immediately rolled to the side to avoid another gouging curse that Mort had sent towards the light in an attempt to hit him as his shield failed. Deciding that he needed to get closer to Mort now that his smokescreen was working effectively, Harry began to slowly move towards where he'd initially seen Mort's spells come from. Frowning he thought of a better idea, "Point me; Mort."

Even though he'd muttered the spell, Mort had apparently had the same idea to advance as Harry and so was close enough that he heard the muttering, or at least thought he had and gotten lucky,

"Extaviscus!" Mort cast in Harry's general direction, exposing his position only about a foot to Harry's left. In the flash of the Entrail-Expelling Curse, both teens saw how close they were to each other but Harry cast first,

"Obscuro!" he cast firmly, causing a black blindfold to appear over Mort's eyes. Mort growled in rage and slashed his wand in Harry's general direction,

"Defodio!" he roared, causing the black wave of magic to fly just inches above Harry's head. Harry pointed his wand straight at Mort's chest and cast the first spell he could think of. Strangely enough it was a charm Sirius had shown him to make kebabs. But the wooden stick that shot out of Harry's wand was more like a stake that a vampire hunter would use, easily three inches thick and half a foot long. This large skewer shot from Harry's wand like a bullet and passed straight through Mort's stomach, just to the left where Harry thought the kidneys belonged. Now with a three inch wide hole through his left kidney, Mort howled in pain as he succeeded in pulling the blindfold free of his eyes. Blinded now with rage and pain, he jabbed his wand hatefully at Harry,

"Crucio!" he roared, sending the arcing red light straight at Harry's kneeling figure. Unable to dodge and unable to conjure something fast enough, the spell hit Harry square in the chest and he was instantly filled with the worst pain he'd ever felt. White spots appeared in front of his eyes and he arched his back as he screamed out loud in pain. The pain didn't stop though and soon his toes and fingers were curling reflexively and the rain clouds began to disappear as his concentration was refocused on trying to keep his sanity under the most powerful torture curse in history,

"Expulso!" a voice cried out that Harry recognized as not belonging to Mort. The torture curse was immediately lifted and Harry gasped for air and slumped on the floor as he watched Mort being flung through the air, crashing on the wet floor several yards away and skidding along the wet floor, leaving a bloody trail in his wake. Realizing that his work wasn't done yet, Harry struggled to sit up, wincing as he did. One of the obvious effects of the Cruciatus curse was that it left every part of your body in pain for hours after it had been cast. Years if you were overexposed like the Longbottoms.

Looking over at Mort he saw his enemy getting to his feet slowly, one hand trying to keep his insides in where Harry had shot a stake through him. Following Mort's scowling gaze, Harry looked to his left to see an absolutely furious Neville Longbottom leading the crowd of people to his rescue, with a distraught Hannah and positively inflamed Susan and Daphne. Turning back to Mort, who was now

limping towards the lifts as fast as he could, Harry deciding immediately that he wasn't going to let any of his friends be hurt by the sickening creature that was his double. Scrambling quickly to his feet he started after Mort despite the protests of the crowd rushing after him. Moving into a lurching sprint, Harry slipped on the watery floor just as Mort blew apart the bars on one of the lifts. Spurred on by the idea that Mort was getting away, Harry got to his feet again and ran as hard as his aching and battered body would allow him. Nearing the bank of lifts just as Mort was limping into one, Harry pointed his wand behind him in a desperate move,

"Accio Macnair's Axe!" he shouted, feeling the familiar tug on his magic that meant that a deadly executioner's axe was now hurtling towards his back. Trusting his instincts he waited until his mind screamed at him before falling down onto one knee mid-run, sliding towards the lift Mort was just closing. Over Harry's shoulder the axe flew, spinning end over end in a deadly circle. Mort's eyes widened as the axe embedded itself in the lift's door, the point sticking into the golden metal of the lift door even as the lift moved away. Swearing wildly, Harry looked up and checked which floor his opponent was going to. Seeing that it was the floor that housed the Wizengamot, Harry blasted the bars off the closest lift and jumped inside, hitting the button as hard as he could.

As his own lift began to rumble down the same track as Mort's, Harry stood, slumped, against the wall as he pointed his wand at the hole the arrow had made in his abdomen,

"Consenesco." He muttered, using the field healing spell that Remus had taught him to heal enough of the wound to make sure he could keep fighting and to keep it from being infected. Closing his eyes to think ahead he realized that the start of the battle between him and his double had been more like a duel than anything else. Harry had used the environment to his advantage, especially with the limited weather magics he'd managed to copy out of a book, and Mort had been a specialist duelist, using the dark arts and some nasty cutting and gouging curses for the most part. In both the narrow corridors of the court level and the confined space of the Wizengamot chamber itself, Mort's style of dueling would have the advantage. Harry wouldn't be able to use any weather magics effectively and without something like Moody's magical eye he wasn't going to have an advantage in a duck-and-cover style battle. While he stood there,

trying to think of a way to fighting against a dark arts specialist in an enclosed space, the answer came to him in a flash.

Growling darkly, Harry Potter's eyes slowly changed to lupine yellow.

Warning! – The remainder of the fight will be M rated for excessive description of blood and gore

With a metallic 'Ting!' the golden doors to the lift rolled open, a spell lancing between them immediately. The overpowered piercing hex powered through the centre of the lift, punching a hole the size of a man's fist through the back of the lift's metal wall. But the intended target of the hex was not harmed by the spell. Mort, the caster, froze in shock as he saw the crouched form of a massive wolf in the centre of the lift. Before he could fire another spell the wolf pounced, using its massively powerful hind legs to propel it across the distance between the two of them.

Harry, aware and conscious of every action as the wolf, opened his jaws in a powerful roar as his huge frame flew through the air towards his totally unsuspecting opponent. His front paws landed on Mort's chest, the claws digging into the yielding flesh as easily as hot knives through butter. He was aware of it. He could feel his talons gripping Mort's skin and muscle, tearing them even as his body weight pushed Mort to the ground with a slam.

Before Mort could think to counter the successful pounce with a spell of some kind, Harry responded to his instincts.

Rip!

Tear!

Kill!

These words rebounded through his head and despite his misgivings, his fears, he felt the instincts resonate with his will. His will to win this fight no matter the cost. His will to completely dominate and destroy his opponent. So, still roaring, Harry brought his jaws down on the tender flesh at the crook of Mort's neck, connecting his neck to his left shoulder. His teeth sank through the skin easily. Tore through the muscles and shattered the already weakened bones of Mort's shoulder. Blood pooled in his mouth.

It was hot.

It was salty.

It was irresistible!

He forced his jaw shut with even more force, using the strength of the wolf's jaw muscles to get a deeper hold on Mort's soft and succulent flesh. Mort screamed in his ear as Harry's teeth broke through his collar bone completely, jabbing into nerves so that he knew Mort's entire existence would seem to be focused on the pain in his left shoulder. Savagely he twisted his head to the side with his teeth still deep inside. Bone marrow from the shattered collar bone leaked into Harry's mouth.

My god... it was better than the blood!

Distracted by the incredible, indescribable, pleasure of the bone marrow, Harry didn't notice that Mort had regained enough sense to use his wand. Harry was hit in the side by a terrible force, a banishing charm, from barely more than an inch away. Even as the force abused his ribs, shattering a few, Harry kept his grip on Mort's shoulder. The force of the banishing charm eventually won against Harry's body weight and flung him across the corridor into the closest wall.

But Harry's jaws had not lost their grip when he'd been hit with the banishing charm. So in order to fling Harry away as it did the charm had to expend most of its force to dislodge his hold. But instead of Harry letting go of his hold he'd kept it so that the hold tore off and stayed in his mouth. So Harry slammed into the black tiled wall of the court level corridor and had to endure a bit of disorientation but Mort was now missing a sizable chunk of his left shoulder, which took a lot more of his attention than Harry.

As Mort's right hand clamped over the profusely bleeding gap in his shoulder, Harry got his bearings and attacked again. This time rushing across the distance between them in two strides to take Mort's right leg in his mouth, just above the foot. Mort screamed in pain once again as Harry's teeth tore into his right hamstring, ripping and tearing at the fragile muscle as Mort's salty blood once again filled Harry's mouth, causing him to drink it down greedily.

Using focus that Harry had previously thought impossible when someone was in as much pain as Mort obviously was, Mort pointed his wand down at Harry and fired a spell off at him, a gouging curse if Harry had to guess later. But at the time, all Harry felt was mind-numbing pain as the curse raked down his side, rending his flesh and shattering his ribs as it passed down the right side of his body. Releasing Mort's hamstring reflexively, Harry howled in pain as Mort lined up another shot with a shaking hand.

The blasting curse would have clipped Harry in his left shoulder if he'd stayed in his wolf form but he'd changed back to his human form as soon as the gouging curse had finished scraping down his side. Because the wolf form was wider at the shoulders than Harry was at the waist, the blasting curse missed Harry's hip by a good few inches. In his human form the injuries made by the gouging curse felt even worse for Harry but it had saved him from losing almost all of his mobility as a wolf. A line ran down the right hand side of Harry's torso, about an inch deep, through ribs, muscles and blood vessels.

Harry's right side was an absolute mess, blood gushing from it and severed muscles twitching in the open air.

Jabbing his wand at Mort, Harry hit his opponent directly in the chest with a banishing charm of his own. Mort coughed up blood when the spell slammed into his chest but it also sent him flying backwards into, and through, the double doors of the Wizengamot chamber. Limping after him, Harry growled around the remaining blood in his now human mouth but couldn't find it in himself to care that the tough bits of food stuck in his teeth were parts of Mort's muscles and blood vessels.

As soon as he entered the Wizengamot chamber a few seconds later he was hit in the centre of the chest by a cutting curse, which made a gash running from shoulder to hip diagonally across his body. Harry roared in pain as blood gushed out, blinding Mort momentarily. Through the blood lust of the wolf inside him and the adrenaline coursing through his veins, Harry had enough thought to use the last bit of strategy he had thought of in the lift,

"W-w-wizengamot chambers!" he called out, spitting out a mixture of his own blood and Mort's blood at the beginning of the sentence, "Lockdown by the order of the Seven!"

A ward shimmered into being in a bubble around the central court of the Wizengamot chamber, trapping both Harry and Mort inside. Mort went to fire a spell and the wards activated. The spell pulsed as if it was about to leave the wand before rippling back through the wood, shattering the wand into a million pieces. Both Mort and Harry, who hadn't known what the wards would actually do, came to the realization that this fight was going to end with even more blood than had already been spilt.

Mort grabbed hold of the wall of the lowered court, pulling himself up shakily to his feet. Harry just stood there, saving his energy as he teetered on his feet. Both just stared at each other for a few, long, seconds.

Seconds passed.

Their wounds bled.

Then, as one, they charged at each other with twin cries of pain and vengeance.

They collided in the centre of the chamber, both slamming fists into the sensitive torso of the other as they both fell to the floor in a flurry of mad kicks and punches, anything to harm the other. Harry rolled on top of Mort, punching his enemy in the side of the face with as much power as his tired arms could muster. Mort rolled with the punch to minimize the damage before reaching up and jabbing his fingers into the deep, wet, gash down Harry's right side. Roaring in pain, Harry brought his head down, head-butting Mort directly on the nose. The pale teen's nose seemingly exploded with blood as Harry's forehead broke it.

One of Mort's frantically groping hands closed around the one of the bronze knockers the doors to the Wizengamot chambers used to have. Gripping the bronze tightly, Mort brought it up as fast as he could; bashing it into the side of Harry's head and cracking his skull open a little, blood seeping through his hair. With the tables turned, Mort rolled on top of Harry and pressed his forearm against Harry's throat, choking him with his body weight as both of Harry weakened

hands tried to pry him off of his throat. Mort spat blood onto Harry's face,

"You just won't die!" he complained in a pained and aggravated hiss, "Why won't you just die? Accept it! Just die!"

Harry response was to lean his head forwards and bite into Mort's forearm as hard as he could. Blood welled up in Harry's mouth and Mort shouted in pain before punching Harry in the nose to break his bite,

"Just die! It's over already!" he ranted to Harry as he continued to choke the original Potter's life away, "I'm the only Harry Potter now! I get the money! I get the political power! And best of all... I get to fuck those two bitches! They're mine now! I'll make them mine!"

Mort swore he saw Harry's eyes flicker dangerously instead of going dull like they were supposed to. Harry's groping hand had found something and he tried to speak. Mort leant forward mockingly,

"What's that lamp chop?" he taunted, pressing harder on Harry's throat, "I think you might have a collapsed windpipe... that always impedes the oratory."

Harry muttered something anyway despite his lack of air. Mort frowned and slapped his cheek with his free hand,

"Speak up I said!" he taunted, his grin from earlier back on his face. Harry grinned back, surprising Mort a great deal,

"F-f-fuck... you..." Harry managed to hiss out before he took the object he'd picked up off the ground and rammed it into the side of Mort's head, straight through his left temple. Mort died with a look of complete shock on his face and a giant splinter of the shattered wooden doors driven clean through his head. Harry pushed Mort's body off of him and took a few deep, shuddering, breaths as he stared up into the ceiling of the Wizengamot. He was bleeding out now. He could tell his wounds were bad. Hell, he knew he was missing an inch of flesh, bone and muscle in a line all the way down his right side.

But he was alive for now.

He'd won.

And to his addled mind, that was all that mattered.

M-Rated scene ends here

Lying face up in a comfortable bed, soft sheets around him and a fluffy pillow beneath his head, was not how Harry had expected to wake up.

Strangely enough he'd half expected to wake up covered in the scratchy sheets of the hospital wing at Hogwarts, staring up at the same ceiling he'd seen so many times before.

The other half of him expected to be dead and not to wake up at all.

That half of him would have to be disappointed it seemed as he was obviously still alive. Well, he was either still alive or Hell was his room in Number 12. Personally he doubted that very much. To him, Hell had always been and would always be the cupboard under the stairs.

So he'd established that he was alive and that he was in his room at Number 12.

Turning his head slightly to the left, an action that sent a huge amount of pain coursing through his entire body, Harry saw the blurry forms of Susan, Daphne, Neville, Hannah, Remus and Sirius sitting or standing at his bedside, all looking at him with relieved smiles. He tried to smile back at them but between how much his body ached and the memories of what he'd done he found it hard to actually smile. One of them, Daphne he thought, delicately put his glasses on him so that he could see them better. He'd been right the first time however, they were all looking relieved that he was awake but all were sad that he was even in the bed with such injuries in the first place. Slowly, painfully slowly, he raised his left hand and waved at them slightly,

"Hey..." he croaked through cracked and bloodied lips. Apparently this was both the right and the wrong thing to say. All of the boys relaxed at his greeting, taking it as a sign that he was okay. The girls took it in other ways. Daphne, her eyes bright with tears, let out a strangled cry and clung to him, burying her face into the sheets that

covered his chest. Hannah burst into tears and clung to Neville. And Susan... well Susan was crying as well but the greeting had also made her angry,

"Hey? Hey?" she questioned him, clearly distraught, "You almost die and all you say is hey?"

Harry blinked a few times before he realized that he actually had no idea how to get out of the impending rant that was obviously coming his way. Deciding to go out on a limb he smiled a little more successfully,

"I love you two." He told both Susan and Daphne, hugging Daphne to his chest weakly with his left arm. For a second Susan looked like she was going to shout at him again before she rushed round to the other side of the bed and cuddled into the opposite side to Daphne,

"Don't you ever scare us like that again..." she cried into his sheets as Harry began to play with her hair to soothe her. He smiled reassuringly as both Susan and Daphne looked up at him,

"I love you two..." he told them again, "And there's nothing on this life, or the next, that will take me from you."

Both girls kissed him on the lips passionately before curling up on his bed, cuddling up to him as if he might disappear if they weren't touching him. After a few hours he realized that neither of them were asleep and that he was starting to hurt where they were lying on him. Touching them both lightly to get their attention he smiled sadly at them both,

"I'm not going anywhere girls but..." he gave them a sheepish look, "But my ribs are quite tender..."

They got the message. Daphne kissed him forcefully on the lips as she got up,

"We'll be outside if you need anything." She assured him before leaving the room slowly. Susan kissed him urgently on the lips, apparently still not reassured that he wouldn't disappear if she wasn't with him,

"Don't ever leave me..." she pleaded into his ear. He kissed her back and shook his head,

"I'll never leave you." He assured her. Susan seemed to take his word for now and followed Daphne out of the room. As soon as the door closed Harry's controlled disappeared.

Tears began to form and fall. His breath came in sobs, wet and heavy. It was all suddenly too much for him. The reality of what he'd done came crashing down. He'd killed two people. One had been an accident sure enough but it was his fault. The other... killing Mort in the way he'd done was animalistic. It was terrible in every sense of the word. Monstrous. Truly and utterly monstrous. And what did that make him? A monster.

Both Daphne and Susan heard his sobs through the bedroom door and were about to barge into the room to comfort him when they were stopped by one of their tutors, the dangerous man they called Cobalt. Cobalt looked at the door while blocking it from them. When he spoke it was to the door and it was soft, softer than they'd expected from him,

"He needs to be alone for this." He explained to them, "The first time you kill someone... you cry. It might be an hour after, maybe a day. But everyone cries and everyone has to come to terms with it on their own. If you go to him now he'll never be able to do it again. In an ideal world I would encourage that. But in this world of ours... with a war going on..."

He rested his forehead against the door as Harry howled and sobbed within,

"He needs to be able to kill. It will hurt him, every time, but he needs to be able to embrace the hurt. He needs to be able to kill."

And that's it... the single longest chapter I have ever written for a work of fan-fiction. Jesus Christ I think I've got blisters on my fingers... :S

No Omakes this time; doesn't feel right at the end of such a serious chapter.

This chapter will probably be criticized to the nine hells and back but it needed to happen. It provides character development that will lead Harry to become an effective war leader, who is willing to take the costs of war (unlike Dumbledore).

This chapter marks the end of the winter holidays; the next chapter will have the gang returning to school.

I hope you've enjoyed this extended chapter and will forgive me for sinking into a little bit too much detail towards the end of the fight scene.

Disclaimer: I own none of the characters used within this story, they all belong to J.K. Rowling. I own none of the places referenced within this story, they belong to their respective owners or J.K. Rowling.

Note: Ah! All of my old friends! How long has it been? 4 months? And yet you all return to read as if it were only yesterday! I confess myself... Grateful :P

Thanks for bearing with me guys but the real reason you're getting this chapter at all is because of my life, my inspiration and my one true love, Briony'Tiger'Romain! This chapter is dedicated to her, my lovely girlfriend, without whom I'd most likely be dead and this story discontinued. Once again, this chapter is dedicated to my loving girlfriend. Thanks for always being there for me babe ^^

Burn it to the ground

When Neville found Harry it was in the last place he expected to actually find him.

Harry Potter was sat at the Slytherin Table in the Great Hall.

This was unusual and so, like most things unusual in Hogwarts, the whole student body had been informed through gossip. Neville himself had heard about it as a rumour but he hadn't put too much stock in it seeing as both Tracey and Daphne were with Susan and Hermione in the library, studying for a transfiguration test if he understood correctly, and that left Harry without any real friends in the house of Salazar. But regardless, there he was.

As he walked down the length of the Great Hall his surprise was raised a little more when he found that his friend was hunched over several stacks of official-looking parchment. Ignoring the glares almost as well as Harry himself, Neville sat down opposite Harry at the Slytherin table. As expected, the Slytherins themselves were bunched at the other end of the table, glaring hatefully at them. Neville glanced down at the parchments as Harry made no move to acknowledge his existence, instead focusing on writing a paragraph in the neatest handwriting he could. What Neville saw caused him to raise an eyebrow,

"Documents to call an emergency hearing of the Wizengamot... a form for the temporary suspension of sentences for the purposes of investigating a criminal further..." he glanced up at Harry, who had finally looked up from his work, "Planning something are we?"

Harry grinned, flashing teeth as he'd been doing often since his battle at the ministry,

"I think it's more plotting than planning." He announced playfully, "And as for why I'm plotting at the Slytherin table... where better to be cunning?"

Neville smirked as he noticed several Slytherins growing red with rage as they heard Harry Potter, the Gryffindor Golden Boy; compare himself to them in any way,

"How about their common room?" he asked with barely concealed mirth, "You know where it is and how to get in."

Harry shook his head with a small chuckle,

"Nah, the atmosphere there sucks." He glanced down the table, "And at least here I don't have to smell them quite so strongly. I swear some of them are so sure of their superiority they don't even shower..."

Seeing the more outspoken Slytherins growing purple now, Neville decided to push it up a notch,

"What about the Chamber of Secrets?" he asked, causing some Slytherins to gasp and others make noises of outrage at the thought of Harry Potter turning the lair of Salazar Slytherin into his personal study, "Once you get past the smell of rotting snake of course."

Harry laughed out loud, drawing the attention of those few in the hall that hadn't been trying to listen into their conversation before,

"Oh it's better than smelling Draco's two apes. Besides, I carved that thing up and sold it for parts already. Daphne's idea." He and Neville both saw the Slytherins now fuming with rage, "Besides... how could I think while having to stare at Salazar's ugly mug? I'd end up gouging out all of the statues of him. Which is pretty much the whole chamber... narcissist or what?"

"Potter!"

Neville and Harry shared a smirk as Draco decided that he was going to be the mouthpiece for the Slytherin House in general. They both turned to regard the Malfoy scion with the cool looks they'd both been working on for open meetings with the Wizengamot,

"Yes Mr Malfoy?" Harry drawled in a passable imitation of Lucius Malfoy, "What does the lowly House of Malfoy want to discuss with the Head of the Most Ancient and Most Noble House of Potter?"

Neville couldn't hold back a smile at how Draco couldn't seem to decide between going pale, at realising that if he wasn't careful his House could be fined for addressing the Head of one of the Seven with such disrespect, and purple, from the towering rage he was growing into. Apparently rage won out over common sense and Draco replied,

"I want you to stop coming over to this table Potter... you have no business being at this table! You are not a Slytherin!" he fumed, "Second, I want you to stop hanging around with Greengrass and Davis! Everyone knows that those two are mine for the taking!"

Neville leant back to watch the fireworks. Sadly he was to be disappointed because Harry kept his cool and merely raised an eyebrow at Draco,

"Really? And you get to decide who sits at this table? Curious... the school rules say anyone can sit at any table they wish, as long as students don't sit at the teacher's table. I'm beginning to think that the House of Malfoy has begun to decline even further into stupidity. And with the actions of your father standing I find that a mighty achievement indeed." Harry replied with a careless attitude. When Malfoy went to shout out an objection, Harry silenced him immediately as his entire demeanour turned cold and steely in an instant, "Second... it is not for you to decide who the Heiresses of two Noble Houses consort with. Your family might be the same level as theirs but it is three generations their junior in regards to the Davis House and sixteen in regards to the Greengrass House. You are new money Draco. All flash and no substance. Their Houses have stood the test of time and yours... has not."

Draco's normally pale skin was a shade of red that Neville had only ever seen in the tomatoes of the Longbottom gardens. He opened his mouth and took a deep breath to; presumably, shout again when Harry executed a move that had Neville almost rolling around in laughter at Draco's expression. Harry merely turned back to his paperwork, gave Draco a side-long glance, and then waved the Malfoy scion off dismissively,

"We're finished here." He told Malfoy in the emotionless tone of someone refined dismissing someone of lower class that he found repulsive in some way. Draco's eyes bugged out at being dismissed as such and Neville discretely placed his hand on the table, his wand under his hand but clearly pointing at Draco,

"Careful Draco..." Neville warned as the blond went for his wand, "Assaulting a member of the Seven... that's an offense punishable by the dementor's kiss if Lord Potter chooses to prosecute."

As Draco paled and pulled his hand away from his wand, Harry chuckled lightly, dryly,

"Oh Neville, don't frighten young Draco." He said in a voice that was at once both kind and condescending, "He doesn't know any better."

Neville didn't bother to try and hide his wide grin. That was an excellently well thought out move by Harry. What he said wasn't openly offensive as it was in Draco's defence but the way he said it would be like a stab to Draco's over-developed sense of pride. Draco started to reach for his wand but glanced at Neville's wand and thought better of it before falling into his old default setting when confronted with Harry; insults. Neville watched as Draco went from fuming with barely restrained fury to arrogantly confident in only three seconds, it was impressive really.

"Well I suppose you had your mud-blood fact finder to help you learn about your duties, just like you do with everything else." He taunted, "After all, you never had a mother and father to teach you like I did."

Neville watched as Harry turned slightly to regard Draco with mild amusement,

"Orphan taunts Draco? Bit infantile don't you think?" he chuckled as Draco scowled, "Besides, from the way you flaunt your knowledge, or more often lack of knowledge, I'd say that Lucius had the most to do with your education. If Narcissa had been allowed to educate you, you might have something resembling cunning, even if it was just a reflection of your mother's."

It took Neville's formidable self-control to stop himself laughing out loud as Draco shook with impotent rage at his favourite line of insults being so casually dismissed. Fortunately the rest of the students had no such self-control and their laughter caused Draco to grow red in the face again as he tried to maintain his calm for the insults he was throwing,

"I see you've already used your illusionary power in the wizengamot to have yourself declared not guilty of killing all those filthy muggles?" he hissed at Harry, "But I could have told them that you weren't the killer. You don't have the guts to take a life, Potter. Bad blood."

Harry looked at Draco with amusement again before turning to fully face the boy. Neville watched as the still faintly smiling Harry stood up so that he was almost nose-to-nose with Draco, who seemed ready to attack while Harry seemed utterly relaxed,

"You don't think I can kill?" Harry asked with the same, small, smile, "Look into my eyes and say that Draco."

Draco opened his mouth to do just that when everyone in the Great Hall gasped in surprise as Draco scrabbled backwards in a blind panic not a second later, babbling incoherently before finally managing to scramble to his feet and flee the hall. Harry laughed as Draco ran from the hall in utter panic, with what appeared to be a thin trail of urine marking his path,

"That's right! Run little ferret!" Harry called after the blond, his voice a pitch lower than usual, with a hint of a rumbling growl, "You are prey Malfoy! Run for your life you cowardly little rodent!"

All of the students, bar Neville, shied away from Harry as he chuckled in that same rough, growling, voice while sitting back down. Neville blinked a little as Harry turned to him, showing that his usually bright green eyes were now a watery, lupine, yellow. Even

just that one glance into those eyes, full of the feral instincts of a wolf, caused Neville to tense up and growl in return, his inner bear reacting to a perceived threat.

And then it was gone.

Neville blinked a few times in surprise as Harry smirked back, his eyes their usual bright green. At his frown, Harry's smirk fell into a frown,

"I've learnt to accept my instincts Neville." He said quietly, soberly, "My instincts call out for the blood of my prey. And Malfoy... well he's prey. And by looking into my eyes, looking at my instincts, he knew it. Same as your instincts told me that my instincts were a threat to you, specifically your young."

Harry grinned lazily and scratched the back of his head,

"Sorry if you can't follow that explanation..." he grinned, "I should probably use a different word instead of saying 'instinct' five times in such a short space of time. Gets a bit confusing."

Harry stretched lazily as he continued to scribble at the official wizengamot documents in front of him. It had been about a week since he'd killed Mort, his dark double, and he was working on turning the rather distressing event into a useful moment in time.

The ministry, and the Daily Prophet by extension, had tried to cover up Voldemort's obvious involvement in the issue. Somehow they'd thought the public stupid enough to that run of the mill 'dark witches and wizards unknown' had been able to use his severed arm (Snape's involvement was not mentioned) to create a dark double which had tortured and killed muggles. Some of the articles sounded like the journalists wanted to blame him by putting some kind of slant on the story so that his severed arm being used in a really rather fucked up ritual to create an evil clone was somehow his fault. But even the wizarding public wasn't stupid enough to believe in the subtle hints that Harry was going dark because his arm had been stolen.

He'd been in contact with Lord Davis and other members of the wizengamot who had been present when Mort had tried to kill them and frame Harry. Lord Davis, or Darren as he insisted on being

called, was perhaps the only member of the governing body that he trusted to actually do his job. The other members of the Seven excluded from that comment of course. It was obvious to him that the Seven knew what they were doing but it was still rather strange that the most competent people on a governing body was supposed to be Seven people. And was actually only four people and teenagers at that.

It was gruelling work, all of this paperwork, but if it helped then it was going to be all worth it. Having said that, Harry had signed his own name so many times that he was beginning to consider changing it, just because he was so sick of writing it. Who knew that it took this long to bring up a court case for a person who had been imprisoned without a court case in the first place?

That's right; Harry's secret project was to have his godfather, Sirius Black, cleared of all charges.

At first he'd wanted to try and do something to get his revenge of Snape. It was obvious that the man had sold him out to Voldemort by supplying the Dark Lord with his severed arm but it was just as obvious that Dumbledore would ignore it completely. So he'd begun planning to get some measure of revenge on Snape when he realised something. From their limited interaction, it was very, VERY, clear that Snape and Sirius hated each other with a passion that was perhaps only matched by how much Snape hated him. What better revenge on Snape than to have his greatest enemy free and clear?

Not only that but with some of the other forms he was signing in triplicate he could have Sirius take the 'dummy' seat for the House of Black in the main Wizengamot. After all, the House of Black had wanted their greatest political power, their place on the Seven, to be a complete secret. Only two people within the House of Black ever knew of it. The one who sat on the Seven (obviously) and the one that took the position of 'Head' of the House. While the member of the Seven was actually the Head of the House, there was always another member of the house who pretended to be the Head of the House.

It was all very much hush hush with some cloak and dagger thrown in there as well. Kind of what you'd expected from the Blacks to be fair. So what he was going to do was clear Sirius' name and install

him as the 'Head' of the Most Ancient and Most Noble House of Black. Thus, Sirius would have legal standing far above that of Snape and could get his own revenge in the form of slander lawsuits if the potions master so much as said a word against him. Of course there was a high probability of Sirius actually doing that instead of just using it as a threat but, strangely, Harry was okay with that.

Harry sighed as he looked up and around at the Gryffindor Common room. With Ron gone the Gryffindors had become as spineless as they ever were, welcoming him and Neville back with open arms as if they hadn't all signed to get rid of them. Of course, none of them could meet either his eyes or Neville's. Seemed that they recognised that while they were sheep, he and Neville were actual lions. Stupid, fickle, people that they were.

Looking up, Harry blinked a few times at what he saw.

What he was looking at made little to no sense, but at the same time was rather expected.

"Luna..." he started, gaining the dreamy blonde's attention, "Why are you in the Gryffindor Common room?"

Luna, with her regular spaced out, half-here, half-not, look gave Harry a smile and continued to look around the common room. Harry glanced around the common room. Some of the other Gryffindors were noticing that there seemed to be a lone Ravenclaw standing in the centre of their common room. Quite a lot of them were just plain surprised, like Harry. Others were shocked. It seemed that they'd just not noticed Luna until Harry had said something. A small minority, to Harry's dismay, whispered about this being further proof of her Looney-ness. Luna turned to Harry and her bright blue eyes seemed to sparkle with recognition,

"Oh hello Harry." She cocked her head to the side as she looked around his head, "I was nargle hunting and I decided to look around you. They seem to be attracted to you for some reason. Then again they are attracted to people who eat marmalade."

This was the part, Harry knew, and that if he was one of those 'anime' characters he was supposed to fall over in embarrassment for his strange friend. Instead he just chuckled a little, startling some of the others around the common room that he was laughing with

Luna and not at her. Luna's smile brightened and she skipped across the room to sit down next to him. He raised an eyebrow with an accommodating smile,

"So need me for anything?" he smirked a little, "Other than being nargle bait?"

Staring into his eyes for a few seconds, Luna seemed to stare straight into his soul. It was very unnerving to be staring into her sparkling blue eyes and yet feel as if she was staring through his green orbs. While Luna seemed to completely ignore the whispers that they were attracting, Harry was all too aware of them. However, he found himself unable to look away from her soul-searching eyes. Finally, Luna blinked and did something that was strange even for her.

Reaching out, she began to scratch Harry behind the ears.

What was really strange, at least to the Gryffindors watching, was that Harry half-closed his eyes and leant into the hand as if he was enjoying it greatly. A few of the closer Gryffindors thought that they heard Harry purring. Luna smiled brightly at this response,

"Good boy." She cooed, as if talking to a dog, "Such a good boy Harry."

To everyone's amazement, Harry purred louder at this strange praise and nodded his head into her hand. One of the third year girls, someone Harry knew by the sound of her voice to be in his unofficial fan-club, decided to speak up,

"Oi!" she called out, gaining Luna's attention. The blonde stopped scratching and Harry opened his eyes to see why. The third year pointed a finger at Luna, "What do you think you're doing? You've bewitched him you freak! What ar-!"

Her rank was sharply cut off however when Harry began to growl. Not as in changing his tone of voice but actually growling, like a large dog. His mouth pulled up in a vicious scowl as he bared his teeth to the third year. What really freaked most people out, however, was when they saw Harry's teeth growing into the sharp teeth of a canine. The girl was frozen in fear but Luna simply flicked Harry on the nose. The young lord whimpered at the unexpected attack and

became docile again, looking at Luna with a frown. Luna, hands on her hips and looking rather stern, shook her head,

"Bad boy." She told him firmly, "You say sorry to the girl."

Harry grumbled a bit before sighing and turned to the still scared third year. He looked at her and then back to Luna. Upon seeing that Luna still had her serious face on, he sighed even more and looked at the third year,

"Sorry." He said shortly, his voice still much deeper than it normally was. His eyes narrowed a little, "Don't insult my pack again. Friend. Don't insult my friend again."

While he was frowning at himself for the slip, the third year nodded frantically before racing upstairs. Harry turned to Luna and the blonde patted him on the head,

"You need to be a good boy Harry." She told him before waving at him happily, "Ttfn! Ta-ta for now!"

With that childish display, Luna merrily skipped out of the Gryffindor Common, leaving a few Gryffindors to wonder how she'd gotten in in the first place. Harry, meanwhile, gripped his quill tightly as he thought about what Luna had said to him before leaving. To anyone else it would just be something to play off as a part of her lovely strangeness but to him it was a message.

As he snapped the quill without thinking, Harry saw the answer in the pool of ink now spreading on his work.

He needed to get his emotions under control because they were channelling his wolf. It had been happening ever since he'd used his Animagus form against Mort. It was getting to be a real danger to him and others. The trick with Malfoy a couple of days ago had all been fun and games but it had almost made Neville turn against him in self-defence. Harry looked down at the ink blot on his work.

It looked like a wolf.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the Wizengamot...!" Harry declared forcefully as he stood in the centre of the courtroom. All eyes were on him. It would have intimidated lesser men but after having

Voldemort flinging curses at you, everything else seems a bit less frightening. He gestured at the gradually rising chained chair, "I present to you, Sirius Black!"

There was a loud uproar from the members of the wizengamot but what really got them shouting in protest, most of them at least, was that Sirius was not chained to the chair. In fact, Sirius was sitting rather comfortably in the chair and with a small smirk on his face as he looked over the outraged looks he was getting. Sirius grinned and raised his hands to the Wizengamot,

"Nice to see you too!" he greeted them happily before pointing to Lucius Malfoy, "Hey! I used to go to school with that guy!"

He grinned down at a smirking Harry,

"He was a dick back then too." He told Harry, none too quietly, "I swear he's gay though. The only person in the world who spends more time on their appearance than his lovely, and aptly named, wife Narcissa."

Of course, Sirius was following Harry's carefully planned out procedure. He was playing his part well. Very well in fact. You'd think Sirius was an actor the way he was portraying the image of a playboy so well. It was either that or he was a playboy. Wait... never mind. It was amusing to see the various expressions throughout the courtroom. Fudge had gone from being bright purple with rage to ghostly pale as he figured out the potential problems with this court case. Lucius Malfoy, who was amazingly still on the Wizengamot, stood up,

"I question on what authority Potter has brought a convicted criminal before the Wizengamot without restraints!" he shouted, gaining the approval of some darker families, "Is this what we can expect now? For our lives and authority to be threatened just because it is the will of one of the Seven?"

There was murmuring.

Harry was mentally swearing. Maybe the older Malfoy had a little bit of cunning after all. He'd brought attention to the greatest weakness of Harry's position as a member of the Seven. Because the Seven had near unlimited powers it was the easiest thing in the world for

the Seven to become legal dictators. They were already if you read the fine print but overall they were just seen as another level of the Wizengamot, giving them the ability to veto anything they didn't like while maintaining a democracy. To point out the fact that the Seven had legal rights to seize total power from all other forms of government meant that opinion could rapidly turn against them.

However, Daphne and Tracey had helped Harry get in touch with his Slytherin side for his rebuttal to this argument, especially considering who had raised it. The brilliant part of the plan? He wasn't going to even say a word. Lord Davis, Darren to his friends, stood up a few rows down from Lucius,

"I call into question Mr Malfoy's right to raise such a question!" he declared, gaining mutters of support from those around him, "It has been established that he is on probation! And as such he has no power to suggest movements of the Wizengamot until the enquiry into his actions has been completed. With all due respect, MR Malfoy, sit down and leave the politics to those who still hold political power in something more than name."

There was laughter from all areas of the Wizengamot. While the power of the Seven was a touchy subject, it was Old Law. And Old Law was hard to work against. After all, if a new House challenged it then they were seen to be making waves to try and make a name for themselves. If a House with 'traditional' values, such as those mainly entirely of Purebloods, spoke against it they left themselves wide open for criticism for contradicting themselves. After all, Pureblood Houses such as the Malfoys gained support by talking about maintaining the Old Laws that kept them in power. For them to attack another Old Law bred doubt into everything they stood for.

Lucius Malfoy, his Lordly rights suspended pending investigation, sat back down with a vicious snarl.

Lord Davis motioned to the centre of the courtroom again,

"Lord Potter." He addressed Harry formally, catching the teenager's attention, "Please state your intentions before the court. It is your right to raise a case; however, many of my fellow members of the Wizengamot are uncomfortable. Please proceed."

Harry bowed his head in respect of Lord Davis' position and request. It further undermined Lucius' argument that the Seven acted as if they were far above the Wizengamot by making him appear to bow to the authority Lord Davis held as a member of the Wizengamot. Merlin, politics was confusing. Harry gestured to Sirius,

"The prisoner will be restrained." He said with a nod to Sirius. Sirius smiled a little and sat in the chair properly, allowing the chains to bind him in place. Many of the Wizengamot members visibly relaxed. Harry continued, addressing the Wizengamot, "The man you see before you has been accused of the betrayal of Lily and James Potter, consorting with the Dark Lord Voldemort and escaping Azkaban prison. I stand before you today resolved to prove to you, beyond a shadow of a reasonable doubt, that this man is guilty of only one of these crimes!"

There was general murmuring around the Wizengamot at this before Amelia Bones, presiding judge and senior ministry official, banged her gavel to silence the body. She looked sternly at Harry,

"These are serious claims you make Lord Potter." She commented. Upon seeing that Harry was not to be deterred, she nodded, "You may proceed with your case Lord Potter."

Harry bowed his head to Amelia in respect for her position and authority over him. Bloody politics. He looked out over the Wizengamot,

"First, ladies and gentlemen of the Wizengamot, let me ask you a question." He paused here for dramatic effect before spreading his arms wide in a questioning manner, "Which of you were present at the trial of Sirius Black?"

There was a general murmur throughout the Wizengamot which seemed to become louder with each passing second. Why? Because every member asked their neighbour whether or not they had been present at the trial. When every single answer was 'no' there was a lot of talk about what it could possibly mean. Holding his hand up to bring order to the Wizengamot, Harry looked at them with a grave expression on his face,

"Lords and ladies... please settle down." He told them, succeeding in calming the Wizengamot in a way not seen since Dumbledore had

first taken to politics, "The reason why none of you remember presiding over the trial of Sirius Black is as simple as it is sickening."

The members of the Wizengamot were interested now. Though most of them were rather old, none of them were old enough to be considered senile. Especially when the trial was said to have taken place. Harry continued,

"It is a piece of corruption so vile that it threatens to tarnish our entire system of government!" he declared forcefully, "For you see, esteemed members of the Wizengamot, Sirius Black, son of esteemed member Orion Black, was not given a trial!"

As Harry had expected, there was a complete uproar from the Wizengamot. They were utterly outraged. The trial of someone of Sirius' former standing should have been taken before the Wizengamot by virtue of his name alone. But because of the nature of his crimes he should have received a trial before the whole Wizengamot as well. Madam Bones banged her gavel several times to achieve quiet,

"Do you have any evidence to support this claim Lord Potter?" here she paused before adding, "Aside from the general testimony of the Wizengamot as a whole."

Harry nodded and held up a single file. It was a rather plain, manila, file that suggested it spent most of its life in the care of civil servants. What caught everyone's attention however was the name written across it in bold letters.

Sirius Black.

Holding up to the Wizengamot, Harry showed them how thin it was before tapping it with his wand. There was a red glow on the file and the sign of the Ministry glowed brightly on the front. The seal was also a powerful charm, which meant that no documents could be taken out of the file. The fact that the seal was still active showed that it had not been tampered with and, therefore, everything within was truth. He handed it to Madam Bones,

"My proof is the certain lack of something." He told the Wizengamot as a whole as Madam Bones read over the two sheets of paper within the file, "The lack of any documents regarding a trial, crimes

he is accused of or even his personal information! Madam Bones, can you please confirm to the Wizengamot which two sheets of paper are in the file of Sirius Black."

The Wizengamot waited with bated breath as the head of the DMLE read through the papers once and then again. She handed the file to the scribe to have him copy the contents. Madam Bones cleared her throat,

"There is no transcript of any trial of any kind taking place." She told the Wizengamot plainly, "The only documents in his personal file are his prisoner information for Azkaban and the warrant for his arrest after he escaped."

Once again, the Wizengamot played right into Harry's hands. Just as predicted there was a general uproar of genuine outrage. Not so much because Sirius had been denied justice for 15 years, but because it was evidence of someone undermining their authority. Daphne and Tracey really were a credit to the House of Cunning. They'd predicted all of this with startling clarity and Harry was glad that they were on his side. Madam Bones banged her gavel several times until there was, more or less, silence in the courtroom. Harry continued,

"Esteemed members of the Wizengamot... a great injustice has been perpetrated!" he told them firmly, "And to make it worse? The decision was made by someone hell-bent on circumnavigating you, the highest members of our government! I ask you, esteemed members, what is the world coming to when your authority is usurped? I ask you one thing... to take back the right that they stole from you! I ask only that you do what is your right, by birth, to give this man the trial he deserves!"

There was a general roar of approval from the Wizengamot, with a few of the old men actually clapping at the end of his speech. Once again Harry reminded himself to be thankful that Daphne and Tracey were on his side. After a vote was held, in which literally every member of the Wizengamot voted to give Sirius a trial, the veritaserum was administered to Sirius and Harry was given the floor once again,

"To confirm that the veritaserum is working, please state your full name for the members of the Wizengamot." He instructed the drugged Sirius with a small smile. Sirius blinked blankly a few times,

"My name is Sirius Orion Black the third." He responded in the dull tone of voice that alone suggested the potion was in effect, "I prefer to be called Padfoot."

There was murmuring about his addition of a nickname but the veritaserum had been proven to work so Harry carried on with the questions,

"Let's get right to the point shall we?" he asked the wizengamot before turning back to Sirius, "Sirius Orion Black the Third, have you ever sworn allegiance or given any intentional assistance to the man known as Voldemort?"

Various members of the Wizengamot reacted poorly to the use of the Dark Lord's name. Either out of fear of the Dark Lord or out of disguised anger at his 'disrespect', Harry neither knew nor cared. Sirius blinked once,

"I have never served Voldemort in anyway." He declared, sounding defiant even with the enforced monotone, "I hate the despicable creature with every fibre of my being."

There was a lot more general murmuring after the shrieks of the name's use. The Wizengamot were beginning to doubt the conceptions they'd had of Sirius before the trial. Before the trial the ministry's own propaganda had repeatedly expressed that Sirius Black was Voldemort's most fanatical follower. And yet here he was, under veritaserum, confessing to have never served Voldemort and hating everything about the man. Madam Bones, using her powers as the head of the DMLE, banged her gavel,

"Since there is no evidence against the accused's defence of his character, under veritaserum, it is the decision of this court that Sirius Orion Black the Third be found not guilty of the crime of being a Death Eater." She looked out over the wizengamot, "Is there any among you that would dispute this?"

A member of the wizengamot, Lord Nott, stood pompously. Of course Harry was unsure the man knew of any other way to stand

other than pompously. Nott smiled a wicked smile, as if he'd found something to destroy Harry's case,

"I say that the accused has subverted the veritaserum." He declared arrogantly, despite the fact that fighting the effects of veritaserum was all but impossible, "What of his murdering Peter Pettigrew? Is that not the action of a Death Eater?"

Two reactions were most prominent within the chambers of the wizengamot. Firstly, Lucius Malfoy slapped his hand to his head in annoyance. Secondly, Harry Potter grinned like a Cheshire cat as Nott walked right into his plan. Harry smiled slyly,

"An excellent point Lord Nott..." he grinned, "Why don't we ask him?"

Lord Nott, a Death Eater of some renown if his appearance in the graveyard at the end of Harry's fourth year was any indication, paled and tried to withdraw his comment. But it was too late. Harry turned to Sirius,

"Sirius Black..." he drew the question out like a good showman, enjoying how the moment stretched, "Did you kill Peter Pettigrew?"

Sirius, keeping his vacant expression, blinked once,

"No." he declared firmly in his drug-induced monotone, "I did not kill Peter Pettigrew. He used his illegal Animagus form, a rat, to escape into the sewers. I wish I had killed him."

Harry tutted and wagged his finger at Sirius, now feeling like the ring master of a circus. To be fair, the wizengamot was often as hectic as a circus so he couldn't really be blamed. He grinned at Sirius,

"Why did you wish to kill him so badly Mr Black?" he asked in a mock curious tone, "After all... you were the secret keeper who kept the Potters safe right? Their deaths could only be blamed on you, being a traitor."

Sirius would have been grinning too, Harry knew, if the veritaserum didn't rob him of any way to express his emotions,

"I wanted to kill Peter Pettigrew because I was not the secret keeper for the Potters." He revealed simply, causing many members of the wizengamot to gasp in surprise, "The real secret keeper, and traitor, is Peter Pettigrew."

Instead of the uproar that Harry had been expecting from the wizengamot there was only silence. Surprised, he turned around to see that the members were indeed standing arguing with each other rather animatedly but no sound travelled from them. It was obvious that Madam Bones had activated the privacy wards for the final deliberation. Noticing that Sirius was coming out of the effects of the veritaserum, Harry slapped his cheek playfully a couple of times,

"Wakey wakey sunshine." He joked as Sirius shook his head to remove the grogginess of the effects of the veritaserum, "They're deliberating on your freedom now."

Now a bit more aware, Sirius grinned happily at his godson. If he had not been chained to the chair he would have hugged his godson. The dog Animagus smiled happily at Harry,

"I couldn't be more proud of you Harry." He told his godson, almost glowing with pride, "You are doing so well with your life. Two attractive girls. You're fighting the good fight against Voldemort when men twice your age are cowering in fear and refusing to accept the truth. And despite all that... you still find time to do some political wrangling to free your Dogfather."

Here Sirius paused, obviously remembering Harry's parents even as he glowed with happiness and pride,

"I know a lot about your father and I know he'd be proud." He told Harry quietly, "I don't know as much about Lily. I think that's why I mainly talk about your father. But the point is... I know that Lily would be proud of you as well. You're so much like both of them and yet you're a better man than James or I could ever hope to be. And your heart is even bigger than Lily's."

With small tears in his eyes, Harry gave his godfather a quick hug. It wouldn't do for him to hug the man too much after all, he was supposed to remain slightly aloof as his defence. He wiped the tears away with a small smile,

"Thanks Sirius." He replied quietly, "I often wonder if what I'm doing would make them proud of me or if they would have wanted me to do something differently."

Before Sirius could say anything the noise came back, letting them both know that the privacy wards had been retracted. Both Harry and Sirius looked at Madam Bones as the head of the DMLE stood imperiously,

"It is the decision of this court..." she paused and gave Harry a small smile. Apparently she recognised the benefits of acting like the ring master as well, "That Sirius Orion Black the Third is not guilty of one account of membership of the terrorist organisation known as the Death Eaters. Sirius Orion Black the Third is found not guilty of two accounts of accessory to murder. Sirius Orion Black the Third is found not guilty of one account of murder. Sirius Orion Black is found guilty of escaping Azkaban prison; however, since his imprisonment was unlawful, he has been acquitted of this charge."

The chains receded back into the chair and Sirius was able to stand shakily. Madam Bones banged her gavel,

"From this moment on..." she smiled a little bit at Harry and Sirius, "Sirius Orion Black the Third is a free citizen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and is able to take his place on the wizengamot as Lord Black."

Overwhelmed now that his life as a wanted man was no over, Sirius turned to Harry and hugged him tightly.

Sirius Black was free.

It was February the 1st and Harry Potter was once again cursing the existence of bow ties and every type of formal clothes ever invented. To him, formal clothes seemed to have been invented by a woman with for the express purpose of making men uncomfortable. Right now he was back at Number 12 Grimmauld Place in the living room, tugging at his black bow tie in a vain attempt to loosen it. He was dressed in a simple black tuxedo so the bow tie was deemed a necessity but it still annoyed him to no end.

Across the room from him, lounging comfortably in an easy chair, Sirius Black chuckled at his godson's expense. The former convict

had cleaned up nicely, dressing in exactly the same tuxedo as Harry only in his size. He was relaxed so he had no trouble with his bowtie,

"You're doing it wrong." He advised Harry with a chuckle, "Just relax otherwise that tie is going to feel tighter than it actually is."

Harry, now growling and giving up on loosening the bowtie, shot his godfather a dirty look,

"It's only because of you that I have to wear this god forsaken monkey suit." He narrowed his eyes at Sirius, "You know I hate wearing suits and alike."

His godfather merely grinned at him before reaching down and picking something up from the table closest to him. Holding it up to his face, Sirius looked through the eye-holes of the masquerade mask he was going to be wearing. Not surprisingly it was styled with magic to look and feel like the fur of his Animagus form,

"Because when Sirius Black throws a party it has to be the whole hog!" he declared happily before peeking from around the mask, "Don't tell me you're not excited about spending Saturday night out on the town with your beloved Dogfather?"

Looking down at his own mask, Harry noticed that it was much simpler than Sirius' overtly magical mask. His was a simple black mask with lenses over the eyes. Of course the lenses were magical. They were spelled to move with his own eyes but they were yellow and lupine in appearance. He smiled a little bit as he held up his own mask to his face,

"And when Harry Potter attends a party...!" he started in the same way as Sirius before moving the mask and sticking his tongue out at Sirius, "He likes the dress-code to be casual."

Pouting at his godson, Sirius growled good naturedly before waving his godson's concerns off,

"Oh hush you." He insisted with a grin, "You know you'll love it! Getting shit-faced on a Saturday? What kind of a teenager wouldn't want that? Not to mention your two girls will be there..."

At the mention of Daphne and Susan, Harry's cheeks flushed lightly. Dancing the night away with the two of them did seem like a good idea of a party, even if it did include formal wear. He frowned as something occurred to him,

"How will I know it's them?" he asked in a worried tone, "What do their masks look like? What dresses are they wearing?"

Sirius just gave him a cheeky grin. After a few moments a staring contest broke out. Both men stared intently at each other before Sirius sighed a little bit,

"Damn your green eyes... Lily always won the staring contests too." He shrugged a little, "I lied. Susan and Daphne owed me to tell you that they won't be attending the party at Hogsmeade tonight."

Now rather annoyed, Harry scowled at his godfather,

"Why did you tell me that they were then?" he asked with a frown, "Probably because you knew that I wouldn't agree to dress like this unless they were coming."

Clapping a little bit, Sirius grinned, pointing at Harry,

"Give the boy a prize! We have a winner!" he joked before shrugging, "Look Harry. Daphne is in the Hospital Wing with... feminine issues and Susan is attending a function with her Aunt. Now they both said that you should go to the party, get drunk and enjoy yourself. Take a look yourself."

With that, Sirius threw a paper aeroplane across the room at his godson. Catching it easily with his seeker's reflexes, Harry frowned but read the letter. Surprisingly it was exactly as Sirius had told him. He had actually thought his prankster godfather was messing with him for a second but they were as he said, Daphne had 'woman issues' and Susan was at some Lord's funeral with her Aunt. One phrase confused him however. Both Susan and Daphne agreed to give him something to make sure that his night was fun. He turned to Sirius with a puzzled expression,

"Sirius..." he paused for a second, "What's a 'hall pass'?"

Sirius just laughed at how lucky his godson was.

"I swear to god..." Harry seethed as he hung onto the lighting fixture for the Hogs Head pub in Hogsmeade, "I am going to kill Sirius for getting me into this..."

Before he could think of any ways to kill Sirius, a small amount of plaster falling onto his hands made Harry swallow nervously. Looking up at the ceiling, he saw cracks appearing from where the chandelier was fixed to the ceiling. It seemed that the loud music that was vibrating most of the room was making the fixture unstable. Before he could think of doing anything, the chandelier broke free of the ceiling and he was sent plummeting to the dance floor below. As he fell he had enough time to voice a single thought,

"Who the hell thought the Hog's Head needed a god-damn chandelier?"

Of course, the various people enjoying the heavy musical beat and the free alcohol had also been watching Harry hanging from the chandelier so when it fell one of the less drunk wizards had the clever thought of vanishing the chandelier to make sure no one got hurt. As for Harry, the dancers happily caught him, carrying him on top of them by passing him from person to person until they set him down beside the bar. His heart beating ten to the dozen, Harry sat down at the only barstool free and collapsed forwards onto it. The barman, a man who looked suspiciously like Albus Dumbledore, laughed at his misfortune before pouring him a glass of firewhiskey,

"You'd enjoy this a lot more with some liquid courage." He told the young Lord before grinning, "Of course it wouldn't stop you getting into those situations. You'd just like it more."

Harry was about to refuse when he heard Sirius' voice, loud even in a room full of happily dancing masquerading witches and wizards,

"No doubt my godson could shave that cat with only his teeth!" he boasted, his voice miraculously not slurred by the inhuman amount of alcohol he had consumed, "I bet he could even do it without a razor!"

Turning back to the bar, Harry gripped the glass of firewhiskey and looked up into the twinkling blue eyes of the barkeeper,

"Make me enjoy it more you say?" he looked at the firewhiskey before sighing, "I couldn't possibly enjoy it less I suppose..."

With that, Harry screwed his face up in preparation and readied all of his Gryffindor courage. Without any further warning he placed the glass to his lips and tipped it back, swallowing the entire glass down as fast as he could, a good three mouthfuls. Both Harry and the barman waited expectantly. After a few seconds Harry's face grew red and steam billowed out of his ears. Before the barman could laugh or say anything about Harry's rather foolish decision, Sirius' voice cut through the sound of very loud music again,

"Of course my godson can bite the wings off a fly!" he declared happily with a lot of drunken pride thrown in there for good measure, "He's Harry Freaking Potter!"

The barman, one Aberforth Dumbledore, gave Harry a sympathetic look before refilling his half-pint glass with firewhiskey again,

"Best down that one as well son." He advised the young Gryffindor, "I fear you might need it with all the boasting your godfather is doing for you."

Harry stared at the glass for a few seconds before glancing up at the barman with a mildly scared expression on his face,

"I think I might need another one after this one..." he muttered before downing his drink immediately, as he'd done with his first one. Steam billowed out of his ears and Harry waved his hand in front of his face, "Well I'm beginning to see double... but none of these bets are sounding any better... one more for the road?"

Aberforth accommodated him, refilling his half-pint glass again. After a few seconds hesitation, he left the bottle by the glass,

"You'll need it." He told the boy sympathetically, "Sirius Black always was a handful when drunk. Or sober. Or awake for that matter."

Harry was half-way through downing his third large glass of the hard stuff when his godfather emerged from the bustling bodies of the dance floor. Seeing his godson downing a glass of firewhiskey, Sirius laughed happily and slapped Harry hard on the back. Aberforth showed how spry he was for his age by neatly side

stepping the firewhiskey when Harry spat it out from the force of the slap to his back. The barman hadn't even broken the motion of cleaning a glass. Harry turned to his godfather, not at all surprised that his godfather was so drunk even his mask was askew. Harry's own mask was firmly in place but apparently Sirius could tell it was him. So could the barman for that matter. But before he could ponder what that meant, Sirius lowered himself so they were at eye level, wobbling as if the ground was unstable,

"Harry... you have to do something for me..." he told his godson, holding onto his shoulder to keep from falling over, "I promised the winner of a drinking contest... that I'd find someone for them to face in the last round... you have to stand in for me buddy. I'd do it myself but..."

He gestured at a concerned looking man hovering next to him,

"But Moony says I've already had too much..." he gave Moony a weak glare, "Bloody wolf can't get drunk... poor bastard... anyway... where was I?"

At this point Harry was seriously regretting coming out to a party with his godfather. But he'd downed a pint and a half of firewhiskey in the last five minutes. He wasn't exactly in his right mind when he blinked a few times,

"You were telling me that I have to take your place at a drinking competition." He told his godfather without realising how stupid he was being until he'd finished. His eyes widened, "Wait! No you were talking about!"

But it was too late for him to deter his godfather. Sirius cheered happily and dragged Harry off of the barstool with surprising strength for someone who was blind drunk,

"You have to be my champion...!" he declared drunkenly as he pushed Harry down into a seat. He pointed drunkenly across the small table at a woman who was, like everyone else, wearing a mask, "You have to drink this woman under the table... family honour depends on it!"

With that last declaration, Sirius keeled over backwards, leaving Remus to catch his best friend before he was trampled by the

dancers. Shaking his head as Remus took his godfather away; Harry looked across the table at his 'opponent'. Said opponent was obviously a woman, she was wearing a tight fitting black dress and it made it very clear that she was a woman. Her hair was dark and wild, not unlike Harry's own, but hers had been grown to bellow her shoulders. She was older than him, by quite a margin, but between the effects of the alcohol, the fact that she'd aged gracefully and that he was a straight, male, teenager, he labelled her as looking like a MILF. He blinked a few times behind his mask as he studied the intricate silver designs on her black mask. It took him a few seconds to realise that she'd spoken,

"Oh..." he blinked a few times, "I'm sorry, I kind of lost focus there for a second. What did you say?"

The woman smiled a coy little smile with her ruby red lips. Harry couldn't help but stare at her plump lips. It was hard to imagine ever kissing anyone other than either Susan or Daphne but by the looks of this woman's lips it would be a pleasure to kiss her as well,

"I was remarking on Sirius Black selecting you as his drinking competition champion." She leant forwards, giving Harry the impression that she was looking at him more intently than before, "Could it be that you're close to him?"

It was a very odd thing to say. Before the summer, Harry wouldn't have remarked on it at all but now that he was acting a little bit wiser he knew to be more cautious. He was dealing the effects of the alcohol for sure but even with his sense partially dulled he knew that something was wrong. It seemed though, that she was feeling the effects of the alcohol more than him, otherwise she wouldn't have been quite as obvious about it. He smiled a little at her and gestured at the two shot glasses and the bottle of firewhiskey,

"How about I tell you if you win?" he suggested with a small smirk, "Come on... you should be able to drink a boy of my age under the table... right?"

The woman licked her lips and poured the two glasses full of firewhiskey. Sliding one over to Harry, her fingers lingered on his a bit longer than was socially acceptable. He took the glass without complaint and held it up close to his mouth. She did the same, smirking as she did so,

"Of course I can drink you under the table." She smirked a little more, "A big, strapping, young man like you can only be beaten by experience."

Harry raised an eyebrow behind his mask, unseen by the woman opposite him. Deciding that there was little harm in seeing what she wanted, Harry tipped the glass back and swallowed the shot of firewhiskey with barely a grimace. For some reason he didn't even have steam coming out of his ears. Seemed he'd become accustomed to it since his first few drinks that night. The woman swallowed her own firewhiskey and poured each of them another glass. Harry tilted his head to the side slightly and looked at her,

"Well what can I call you?" he asked her with a small smile, "I'd ask your name but it would defeat the purpose of wearing a mask."

She smiled her coy little smile and swallowed her firewhiskey easily. Harry had to do the same and did so willingly,

"Didn't anyone ever tell you that it's rude to ask someone's name without giving your own?" she cooed before chuckling lightly, "But you may call me... Raven."

Harry looked at 'Raven' with his head tilted to the side to convey his mild confusion. Raven just chuckled at his expression so he smiled faintly and they once again refilled their glasses,

"You may call me..." he paused for a second to think of a name. He knew that he couldn't use his real name so he decided upon something different, "Storm. Call me Storm."

Raven purred a little, a sound that made Harry automatically think that he was prey before a predator. And strangely he was okay with that. He smiled in return and she smirked at him wider,

"Storm..." she breathed quietly, "I like it. Now... shall we get shit-faced?"

Harry grinned happily. Now that was the kind of conversation he had expected from a drinking contest! Raven mirrored his expressed and the two of them downed their shots once again. There was a loud

cry of happiness from the dancers around them and Harry grinned happily,

"Seems to me that everyone's enjoying the party." He mused with only a slight slur in his speech. The alcohol was beginning to affect him more and more but he was still able to think clearly, "I must say I'm having fun with you."

Raven smirked a little bit but Harry could tell that she was even more drunk than he was, if her mild swaying was any indication. He blinked a few times as he felt himself swaying. The last drink had affected him much more than he had thought. Deciding that now was a good time to concede defeat, he waved his hand when Raven offered him another drink. His drinking partner smiled happily and stood, uncertainly, from her chair,

"As winner of the drinking contest I think I have the right to decide my own prize." She declared before moving round the table to stand behind him, "I want a dance. Before this party ends I want a dance."

Harry didn't really see the harm in having a dance with the attractive older woman so he stood up in much the same manner as his drinking partner and smiled at her,

"But of course my dear!" he agreed readily as he took her hand, chuckling as he did so, "But you should know that the party isn't due to end until about mid-morning right?"

Without a word, Raven tugged Harry's hand and pulled him along as she weaved through dancers to reach the middle of the dance floor. Finally able to move without hitting someone, Harry turned to Raven to ask her something. He didn't even know what he wanted to ask her because as soon as he turned she was on him, kissing him passionately. Breaking the kiss reluctantly (her lips were indeed plump) Harry looked at the older woman with a light frown,

"Why did you do that?" he asked her with some suspicion as well as confusion, "You're very attractive but I'm... what? Half your age?"

Seemingly ignoring what he'd just said, Raven pressed her body up against his tightly so that he could feel the weight of her breasts against his chest. He frowned a little bit more even though his teenage body tried to convince him that this situation was good for

him. He pushed her away gently but she was on him again, wrapping her arms around his head to kiss him again,

"Why?" she cooed childishly, "Why because I'm a bit of a hedonist. So you know what I believe...?"

She ground her hips against Harry's and the teenager's cheeks flushed bright red at the friction of that their hips caused on each other. Once again he tried to push her off of him but her hold on his head and shoulders was a bit too strong,

"What?" he ground out as he continued to pry the drunken older woman off of him, "What do you believe?"

Of course as soon as he'd said it he'd wished he hadn't because even though he couldn't see her eyes through the lenses of the mask he was pretty sure she was now looking at him like a piece of meat. Harry suddenly regretted the improvements the runes inscribed into his skin had given his body. If he was still skinny then no older woman would have been trying to rape him on the dance floor,

"Simple..." she cooed in the same childish manner. Alarm bells were ringing in Harry's head about the way she was talking now. Licking her lips, she kissed him again as hard as she could, "If it feels good... do it!"

Harry, his mind swimming with hormones, was about half a second away from kissing her back when he realised why there were alarms ringing in his mind. His eyes widened as he remembered something Sirius had mentioned in a very off-hand kind of way when talking about various Death Eaters.

I tell you one thing Harry, every Death Eater has a trait that allows you to figure out who they are beneath the mask. Lucius Malfoy? Just look at the hair. Avery? He's busy trying to look like a pirate. Snape? Again, look at the hair. Hell, even the Lestrangle brothers have weird tastes in hats. But one of them... is my cousin Bellatrix. I told you before that I don't blame her fully for becoming a Death Eater, my family corrupted her thoroughly. But one thing that I always disliked about her... was the stupid little baby cooing noises she'd make when she was teasing someone.

Before Harry could react to the fact that Bellatrix Lestrange was the woman who'd been trying to rape him on the dance floor, an explosion rocked the building and the happy laughs of the dancers turned to screams. Angry shouts of particularly dark spells filled the air as he saw that a large portion of the Hog's Head pub had been blown apart, exposing the interior of the pub to the winter chill of the Scottish Highlands.

Through the burning gap in the side of the building Harry could see dozens of black cloaked witches and wizards running rampant through the streets. Their only source of resistance seemed to be those party-goers still sober enough to tell which end of the wand they should be holding. Up in the sky, the ugly smoke of the Dark Mark moved against the white clouds. Harry wiped round quickly, his wand in his hand as 'Raven' removed her mask to show her purple eyes, dancing with glee as she raised her wand. It was unmistakably the twisted wand of Bellatrix Lestrange. She licked her lips,

"Sorry dearie. I really did want to play with you." She cooed, "But I can find other things to bring me pleasure. Like this. Avada Kedavra!"

Oh noes!

Sirius is released but his celebration has been crashed by Death Eaters!

How will our heroes ever escape from this, their most perilous adventure yet?

How Harry duel when he's drunk?

Will Sirius sleep through the entire thing?

Does this mean that Harry thinks Bellatrix is his idea of a MILF?

The answers to these questions and more in the next exciting chapter!

My Immortal

Remus Lupin was considered, by many, to be a very calm and level headed man. The kind of man who had been mature enough and strong willed enough to curb some of the Marauder's legendary dislike of Slytherin and habit of targeting them for pranking. The reasoning was that if he could have some measure of control over James Potter and Sirius Black with his growing maturity, at the height of their immaturity, then he must have grown even more mature since. For the most part this assumption was correct. He was mostly mild mannered and was the only person in the entire Order of the Phoenix who had a little swear jar.

However, at this moment in time Remus Lupin was anything but level headed. The side of the Hogs Head pub had just exploded in a display of violent spell work and Remus had no doubt that the people dressed in dark robes were the cause. Death Eaters alone were often enough to push Remus to the edge of his rather legendary patience. As a 'dark creature' people expected him to have joined up with the merry little band of murderers a long time ago but Remus hated everything that the Death Eaters stood for with a passion. It had been a Death Eater who had betrayed his friends Lily and James, ensuring their death and their son's exile to the muggle world. It had been a Death Eater, having bought off the courts, which had pushed his friend Sirius into Azkaban without a trial. So the very presence of Death Eaters was enough to press him into beginning to lose his cool.

Another thing that had Remus Lupin ready to kick some Death Eater ass was that both Harry and Sirius had still been inside the Hogs Head when the wall was blown into pieces. Remus didn't have many friends because most people within the wizarding world were afraid of him because of his lycanthropy. Others weren't afraid, they just saw him as some form of wild animal instead, a sub-human. Sirius Black was the last of his great friends from Hogwarts and after finally seeing him proven innocent, he was not about to see him made sport of by some inbred morons with delusions of greatness. And Harry... well Harry was Harry. He might not be the boy's godfather but he might as well have been as both he and Sirius had been so close to James and Lily and both of them loved and cared for the boy deeply. Ever since Harry had discovered his Animagus form however, the lupine instincts inside Remus had made him even

more protective of the boy. Although he doubted Harry would very much like being referred to as cub.

But all of that would have meant that Remus would have been a bit angry, confident in both Sirius and Harry's abilities as he was. What had him now in a blind rage, blood boiling and teeth bared was one of the Death Eaters terrorising some of the innocents as they ran away. He was a tall man with slicked back hair and robes that stayed open to expose his heavily scarred chest. His face was also rather heavily scarred but when he grinned viciously at some of the civilians it was clear that he'd filed his teeth to sharp, deadly, points.

Remus Lupin, the level headed man who had controlled the Marauders in their most adventurous days and pushed himself to be as polite as possible to others, hated the man with a passion. The very presence of the man made Remus see red, made him desire nothing more than the man's head on a pike. Normally he wouldn't like to express such thoughts because they were a reflection of the blood lust his lupine side held but right now, as he was charging down the road towards the man with his rage pounding in his ears, Remus let it out,

"Greyback!" he roared, getting the heavily scarred man to suddenly turn in his direction, grinning madly as he did so. This drove Remus on even more, that damned feral grin having haunted his dreams as a child, "I'll kill you! I'm going to rip you apart!"

Fenrir Greyback, possibly the most savage werewolf in Britain, opened his arms wide as if for a hug but both men knew that it was more of a primal challenge. The roar that followed it left little doubt that it was a challenge and not, as some optimists might have guessed, a request for a hug,

"You think you can take me cub?" he roared back, grinning the feral grin that Remus hated so much, "I'll beat you down to the bottom of the pack where you belong!"

Forgoing any real duelling style, Remus charged straight into Fenrir shoulder first, slamming the other man violently against the nearest wall. With Fenrir momentarily stunned from the impact, Remus threw his head forwards, head-butting Fenrir right in the nose. There was an audible cracking sound and Fenrir roared in anger, surprise and

pain when blood gushed from his now broken nose. Growling, the scarred man managed to find the room to lift his leg up and punt Remus right in the gut, sending the smaller man flying backwards a few feet, winded but still on his feet. Remus recovered quickly as Fenrir tried to take the time to reset his nose,

"Diffindo!" he called out, waving his wand in a slashing motion at Fenrir's chest. The effect was instant. A dark red line grew across Fenrir's chest from the cutting curse, burst with blood even though it wasn't too deep. What Remus had not expected was that all of the existing scars on Fenrir's chest had dulled the sensations he could feel in the chest while strengthening his skin. So instead of being distracted by further pain, Fenrir was able to jab his wand violently at Remus,

"Repulso!" he managed to growl out through the broken nose. The banishing charm hit Remus in the middle of his torso, between his chest and his gut, and lifted him up into the air as the hammer-like force of magic pushed him backwards a few feet too. Before Remus had even landed, Fenrir was firing another spell, "Diffindo multima!"

While it was a rather weak spell, the multiple cutting curses were an excellent spell for causing your opponent lots of minor injuries. A gust of wind came flying at Remus, who barely had enough time to bring his arms up to shield his eyes. Riding the currents of the mild gust the spell kicked up, small cutting curses peppered Remus, smaller cuts appearing everywhere one of the tiny magical arcs hit him. Bleeding weakly from dozens of different places, Remus forced himself to move into spell casting again, knowing that if he did nothing he would be completely open. Strangely enough, for someone who had so many scars, Fenrir was trying to heal his nose once again. Remus' rational mind would have argued that it was probably because a broken nose was a very distracting type of pain but rationality was long gone in Remus' mind now,

"Repulso! Repulso! Repulso!" Remus roared, sending three banishing charms at Fenrir's unprotected gut. The larger man groaned in pain as the first one slammed him back against the wall but the other two were trying to push him through it, slamming him into the weakened wall with enough force to form cracks. Seeing that his opponent was still on the street level with him, Remus roared and gathered up enough magic to make the spell at least twice as powerful as it should be, "Expulso!"

Fenrir's small eyes seemed to widen a little bit, as if taking Remus' spells as dangerous for the first time in the fight. But he was unable to do anything, unbalanced as he was from the last three quick attacks. The stronger banishing charm slammed into Fenrir with such force that the older man's ribs cracked and the weakened wall caved in around him, covering him in bricks and mortar. And yet Remus was not satisfied with burying his opponent because he knew how strong Fenrir was, even when in human form. He pointed his wand at the slowly moving pile of rubble,

"Incendio!" he declared viciously, a fireball about the size of his fist flying from his wand tip to set fire to the rubble and everything in the pile. The entire pile caught on fire almost instantly, the bright flames dancing across the brick, using oxygen and the magic used to cast the spell for fuel. Still wary, Remus took a few steps back, not trusting that the man who had haunted his dreams as a young child was actually dead or even knocked out. It would take more than that to beat the strongest werewolf in five generations, even in human form. Of course, Remus was proven correct when the rubble suddenly exploded off of Fenrir, flaming bricks going in every direction. Waving his wand, Remus banished the rubble that came at him back at Fenrir even as the fearsome man changed forwards, his chest now covered in blood and burns,

"Reducto!" he growled at Remus, the curse tearing up the stone of the pavement where Remus had been standing not seconds ago. Losing his patience, Fenrir charged at Remus, intent of mauling him with his overly long fingernails apparently. Deciding to show Fenrir that he wasn't the runt of the pack that he thought he was, Remus waited until Fenrir was in mid lunge before acting quickly. Grabbing hold of Fenrir's hair he pushed the man's already injured face onto his knee, sending the larger man sprawling to the ground. Before Remus could follow up his physical attack Fenrir managed to point his wand at him while clutching his thoroughly traumatised nose with the other hand, "Repulso!"

The banishing charm was weak but it still caught Remus in the gut from a downward angle so he flew back several feet before he landed, skidding across the ruined street of Hogsmeade as he landed. Staying on one knee as he got his breath back, Remus watched as Fenrir growled darkly and managed to stumble to his feet. Remus stood up shakily and the two werewolves looked at

each other with hate-filled eyes before they both reached a decision at the same time,

"Bombarda Maxima!"

"Confringo!"

Now Sirius Black was not a man to be easily deterred by the idea of fighting more opponents than would typically be considered wise. He was also a man who didn't recognise his own limitations. This was a good thing and a bad thing but right now, ducking and weaving to avoid being decapitated by a pirate-wannabe named Avery.

Oh and he just so happened to be blind stinking drunk at this moment in time, making this not a very good situation to be in at all.

Stumbling slightly, Sirius was able to hide behind a cart in the middle of Hogsmeade's main street, letting the wood take the cutting curse so that he didn't lose a limb. He was, understandably, rather attached to them after all. But he was currently at a loss as to what to do, his mind slow and sluggish with the alcohol he'd consumed. From what he'd seen as he was making his mad dash out of the pub, being chased by a few Death Eaters he'd never heard of before, he guessed that Avery had chosen to take him out by himself. The alley was full of Death Eaters and some of them were even running past his cover but not one of them was interested in him apparently. So that meant that he only had to deal with Avery, who was standing in the middle of alley, utterly and completely confident in his ability to take out one drunk Animagus.

What got to Sirius though, was that it was true.

The pirate wannabe was a good duellist but in a straight up fight, Sirius outclassed the slightly younger man. However, this wasn't a straight up fight. He'd gotten himself drunk at the celebration and now he was going to be paying the price, having essentially handicapped himself. Gripping his wand tightly, Sirius closed his eyes tightly as spell after spell rained down against the back of his, admittedly, fragile cover. He needed to try and focus his mind on something James had taught him in seventh year.

The sobering charm.

A particularly violent spell hit his wooden cover with a lot more force than any of the spells before it and Sirius was sent sprawling to the ground, splinters peppering his back. Swearing, he staggered to his feet drunkenly and pointed his wand menacingly at Avery. Well, as menacing as he could do when he was swaying on the spot as if he would collapse on the spot with nothing more than a breeze. Avery, pirate-like bandana in place on his head, took his mask off to reveal his smirk,

"Sirius Black..." he paused as Sirius staggered a little more, as if the ground was moving. Of course they both knew it was just that Sirius was drunk, "You look as if I could flick you and you'd fall over!"

Sirius snarled at the other man but knew that he was right. Hell, right now it was taking almost all of his co-ordination to stand upright and not fall over at some point on his uncertain legs. But seeing Avery trying to taunt him, trying to make sport of him in this state, made Sirius burn with impotent rage,

"Why don't you..." he gritted his teeth as he swayed a little bit more, having to move slightly so that he wouldn't fall over, "Go to hell Avery...?"

The Death Eater merely chuckled in response, knowing that Sirius wasn't a danger to anyone in his current state except, maybe, himself. He shook his head and lazily raised his wand,

"Well I'm sure I'll get there eventually but right now I have a job to do... repulso!" he grinned as the banishing charm caught Sirius in the gut, doubling him over in pain and forcing him down onto one knee, "Seems my Lord doesn't like you at all Black... he wants to see you broken and beaten... expulso!"

Another banishing charm, this one slightly stronger, slammed into Sirius' shoulder, sending the man spinning to the ground again. Trying to pull himself up, Sirius swore loudly at the burning pain that came up in his right shoulder. Even drunk as he was, Sirius knew that his shoulder was either dislocated or shattered. And what was worse was that the haze of the alcohol was numbing the pain so it was bound to be even worse when he sobered up. Climbing shakily to his feet, Sirius dived to the side, avoiding another banishing charm,

"Fuck!" Sirius cried out, having landed on his injured shoulder when diving out of the way. It hurt like hell but he wasn't about to just give up. He gritted his teeth tightly against the pain, "What the hell was that Avery? You cast like a girl!"

Pausing for a few seconds, Avery gritted his teeth in annoyance at the drunken man, pointing a finger menacingly at him,

"Just for that..." He smirked nastily, "You're getting some quality time with Bellatrix before I hand you over to the Dark Lord."

Sirius flinched a little; his cousin was not gentle. Especially not to him. He was a 'blood traitor' after all so he would need to be punished for turning his back on the 'right' way. For turning his back on his family and their way of life. He gripped his wand tightly as he remembered when he was young, when Bellatrix had been much more like him. And they had twisted her. Corrupted her. His mind sharper from the pain in his shoulder, Sirius pointed his wand at Avery,

"Bombarda!" he cried out, causing the pavement in front of the Death Eater to explode violently, throwing the man backwards. Not wasting any time, Sirius made a mad dash towards the nearest building. He just managed to get through the open doorway of a house before a sickly green curse hit the door, burning a hole in it before it fizzled out. Swearing, Sirius looked around the room quickly. Deciding that he needed both arms before anything else, he pressed his right shoulder up against a nearby wall before bracing himself. Gritting his teeth, he rammed the wall, slamming his dislocated shoulder back in place with a huge amount of pain.

Sirius cried out but stifled himself as the wall, just above his head exploded inwards in a shower of plaster and wood. Closing his eyes to avoid losing one of them, Sirius' addled mind had enough presence to push him in action. Ducking down, he narrowly avoided the cutting curse that would have taken his head from his shoulders. He turned to the hole in the wall to see a very angry looking Avery advancing menacingly,

"You just don't get it do you Black?" he seethed dangerously, "It's already over! You've lost!"

Swinging his wand Sirius sent a non-verbal banishing charm at his tormentor/opponent, the spell only coming out at all because he'd over powered it so much that it had to escape. Avery scowled and batted the spell away with his own banishing charm,

"It's not over yet!" Sirius replied defiantly, "The fight is never over!"

Avery raised an eyebrow,

"You seem to be becoming more coherent..." he tilted his head to the side curiously, but grinning as he did so, "I suppose you're sobering up?"

Sirius cracked a grin, the first side of his prankster side since the attack had started. Sure, Sirius has been known for taking things a bit too loosely but even he knew that in a battle that was obviously for your life, you don't joke around,

"Pain is one hell of a motivator." He replied simply, closing his eyes for a second to focus on the sobering charm. The spell was cast and Sirius opened his eyes again, knowing now that it was going to be getting more and more dangerous. With the amount of alcohol he'd consumed he was going to have to wait at least twenty minutes before he was fully sober. Avery knew that as well so he was going to do everything he could to stop Sirius before he could sober up fully. The Animagus gripped his wand tighter and slipped into a loose duelling stance, "Come on then you Blackbeard fanboy... let's go!"

The Death Eater regarded the order member curiously for a moment before he gritted his teeth. He really hated it when people insulted his image,

"For the last time..." he growled, "I am NOT a pirate fanboy!"

Without another insult, Avery slashed his wand twice, sending cutting curses with each wave. Sirius ducked under one cutting curse and cast a banishing charm at the centre of another arc, the cutting curse's magic bending where it was hit before both spells dissipated. Pressing his advantage, Sirius fired off a blasting curse. Unfortunately for Sirius, he was still too drunk to fight effectively and the curse went wide. Thankfully though, it clipped the wall closest to Avery, splintering the slightly younger man with debris that meant he

had to shield his eyes. Taking this as the opportunity that it was, Sirius gritted his teeth and gathered as much of his magic as his sloppy control could manage. He thrust his wand savagely at Avery,

"Expulso!"

The over-powered banishing charm rocketed from Sirius' wand, staggering the caster. But unlike the earlier examples of a banishing charm, this didn't take the shape of a blast of force; this was a blanket spell that covered almost the entire room, picking up everything in its path before flinging them towards the hole in the side of the building. Avery swore as he too was picked up by the blanket spell and flung through the side of the home, the remains of the wall breaking away from the force and following him, colliding with him and partially burying him as he landed in the middle of the street again.

Sirius pulled himself to his feet, panting from exhaustion. That one spell had cost him way too much magic because his control was appalling due to his drunken state. Whereas that spell would normally have cost him a twentieth of his current magical core, his control of his magic was so poor at the moment that it had taken a quarter of the magic he could safely draw upon to sending Avery, and some poor bastard's living room, out into the street. But as the bandana-wearing Death Eater pulled himself out of the rubble, Sirius knew that his fight wasn't over yet.

Suspended in mid-air by Bellatrix's spell, Harry could only grit his teeth and watch as she ordered about some of the nameless Death Eaters. Strangely enough the only thought that came to mind was something he'd thought about when taking part in the drinking competition between the two of them. Since when did Bellatrix Lestrange get sexy? In all of those Daily Prophet pictures she had been skinnier than he'd been after the Dursleys had stopped feeding him for a week after he'd accidentally popped Dudley's football. But now she looked as if she had simply filled out, as if someone had inflated her or something. What it did was turn a middle aged, starved-looking, woman into a curvy and healthy looking MILF.

Upon reflection, Harry decided that when you were pinned to a wall by magic was not the best time to think about how attractive your captor was.

Bellatrix had finished ordering her minions around it seemed because she turned to him with a predatory smirk that spoke of either really bad things or really good things. Strangely, he didn't want to stick around to find out exactly which road the older witch wanted to go down. He swallowed a little bit but that was really the extent of his reaction. Being pinned to the wall of the ruined Hog's Head meant that he wasn't able to follow his first instinct at being fixed with such a wicked smirk, which had been to try to run the hell away from her.

Damn it if she didn't act like she knew what he was thinking! Even as she made her way over to him, idly banishing bodies and broken pieces of furniture out of her path, her hips were swaying seductively and Harry had to forcibly take control of his mind from his hormones. He matched her predatory gaze with his own, not backing down at all when it came to this battle of willpower. Strangely, Bellatrix was the one to look away first, focusing on his wand in her hand, turning it around in her hand, making a show of examining it. She held it up to the light and glanced at him out of the corner of her eye,

"This is a very beautiful wand." She observed with an odd purring quality to her voice, as if she was finding holding the wand very enjoyable, "If you listen very carefully... you can hear it humming with echoes of the power that has been pushed through it..."

She moved closer to him, so that their bodies were only about an inch apart from each other. Smirking, she stuck his wand into his breast pocket, away from his static arms, before giving him a patronising pat on the cheek. Turning away, Harry ignored her obvious sway in her hips. It had been the moving of the bodies that had made his attention snap back. The way she was smiling, a half smile filled with underlying happiness and hunger, told him that she was experiencing something that Sirius had taken the time to describe to him in great detail.

She was in the afterglow.

The insane witch had enjoyed torturing and killing the few dancers she'd gotten her hands on that it was comparable to a night spent having sex. He scowled darkly and couldn't help but growl lightly. Bellatrix turned to him, amused by the sound, and merely waited. It was an invitation to attack her and they both knew it. But they both also knew that Harry was completely and utterly helpless with every

part of him but his head stuck fast to the wall. Unable to do anything more than growl impotently, Bellatrix laughed at him with her high cackle of a laugh. Harry gritted his teeth,

"You're one sick bitch, you know that?" he growled venomously, "What kind of a person enjoys this kind of thing?"

Tutting at him, Bellatrix sat down in the closest usable chair to him and looked up at him with a small smile. As he looked down into her eyes, Harry could clearly see the madness that plagued her in her eyes. They were panicked and her pupils were huge. It was almost as if she was high,

"Well Harrykins..." she cooed in that damnable baby voice, grinning when he growled obligingly, "When I cast those spells... mhmmm... its amazing... it makes my blood sing!"

The simple declaration made Harry grit his teeth tighter in anger. But he wasn't just angry with Bellatrix at the moment, he was angry with the 'Most Ancient and Most Noble' House of Black for pushing someone to become this messed up. You learnt, in the first year textbook for defence against the dark arts, that one of the reasons why the Dark Arts were hated so much was that if you used them too much they became addictive. Bellatrix Lestrange was a textbook example of someone who had delved into the Dark Arts before her mind was able to form any kind of defence against the addictive qualities.

Harry shook it off.

It wasn't his problem if she was an addict and it wasn't his problem that her family had probably pushed her into the Dark Arts at an early age. To him it meant nothing because, victim or not, she was his enemy. And she wasn't just his enemy either; she was an enemy of freedom loving people across the country. She was a danger to herself but she was more dangerous to others. Perhaps before his 'trip to the graveyard', he might have tried to help her. Tried to save her from herself or some such nonsense. But now?

Now he was too cold.

She was his enemy and he fought his enemies to the end because Merlin knew they weren't going to pull their punches either. An

argument that was given further validity by the very fact that he was pinned to a wall by magic, looking like he going to be crucified. After all, he could only move from his neck upwards. He was at the mercy of an opponent he knew probably would have killed him immediately had it not been for the fact that her 'master' probably wanted to do it himself. Harry spat at Bellatrix suddenly, hitting her in the cheek,

"Fuck you." He said simply but venomously, "Do your worst you sick bitch... anything you do to me will be like a love tap compared to what Tom did to me."

Bellatrix had flinched when his spit had hit her cheek but the shock rapidly turned to a great deal of anger. Lashing out with a vicious back-handed strike, Bellatrix's ring cut across his cheek where she'd hit him. Bleeding, Harry kept up the sneer he'd adopted. It was a sneer to make even Snape envious and he knew that it would rub Bellatrix the wrong way. Bellatrix drew herself up to her full height and held her wand loosely in her right hand, placing the tip against Harry's chest. Their eyes locked and Harry could see the perverse pleasure in her crazed eyes even before she spoke,

"Love taps you say?" her eyes narrowed, "Try this! Crucio!"

Pain filled every nerve in Harry's body immediately, every inch of his body feeling like it was on fire from both the inside and the outside. It was like millions of searing pins being stuck into every inch of his body for the express purpose of tearing up his nerve endings through over-stimulation alone. But because he could only move his head and neck, the pain seemed so much worse. When the Cruciatus curse was usually placed on someone they were free to thrash around and the thrashing gave the person some way of expressing their pain, some small way of venting it. Trapped to the wall as he was, Harry could only thrash his head wildly from side to side as his immobile body was tortured for the perverse satisfaction of a witch gone mad.

After what seemed like hours of being held under the torture curse, but was realistically only about a few minutes, Harry felt the pain suddenly leave his body as Bellatrix stopped the curse. This left Harry with a new sensation that was almost equally as unpleasant; the feeling of 'non-pain'. It was when your body grew accustomed to trying to deal with a massive amount of pain and tried to lessen its impact but didn't stop when the pain was gone. His muscles, which

had gone into spasms, had tightened to try and limit the spasms but with the instant removal of the pain they were still tightened. Uncomfortably tight. That was the sensation of non-pain and it was very unpleasant. It took Harry a few seconds to realise that Bellatrix was trying to speak to him. Lifting his head to look her defiantly in the eyes again, he interrupted whatever it was that she was saying,

"Like I said..." he spat at the ground before scowling up at her again, "Love tap compared to Tommy boy."

Bellatrix growled, actually growled, in rage at his words and Harry could tell that she was getting closer and closer to doing something stupid just in the name of getting him to shut up. He was okay with that if he was honest because he thought he knew exactly what she'd do when pushed. Before she could act, Harry decided to push her over the edge,

"You know I've heard stories about the Death Eaters... people say that Death Eaters with their own masks are some of the deadliest fighters in the entire magical world. Their one purpose being to serve their master." He tilted his head to the side mockingly, "But what use could you possibly be to your master when you can't even torture a fifteen year old boy properly? What possible use could he have for you when you're so weak? So pathetic."

This, he knew, was going way too far than was strictly healthy. If he'd pushed her just the right amount then she'd be likely to want to just kill him and be done with it. Of course, it wasn't going to happen like that, he had a bit of a plan. Bellatrix's wand tip glowed a sickly green and she held it right up between his eyes,

"I'll show you how I serve my master!" she shrieked in rage, "I'll kill you and give him your head you miserable little worm! Avad-!"

"And he'd be okay with that?" Harry demanded, interrupting her spell and making her suddenly freeze up. He pushed, "Would he thank you for that would he? For killing me, what would your reward be?"

Her wand moved away quickly, Bellatrix's arm suddenly looking like it could barely hold the weight of her wand. Looking into her wide and panicked eyes, Harry knew that his plan had worked. She was too afraid of the possible punishment that would come if she killed him and not her master. Just from meeting with him the few times

that he had, Harry knew that Tom was too proud to let someone else kill him. No, his continued survival was an insult to Tom's skills so, to Tom's mind, he had to be the one to kill him. It was a really big risk on Harry's part of course. There had never been any solid evidence that Tom would have made up rules so that his followers wouldn't try to kill him but it seemed to have worked.

Bellatrix slowly began to smirk, the panic gone now as she thought about something else. Of course, Harry mentally reflected as Bellatrix slowly brought her wand tip down to the mark on her left forearm, it also meant that Tom would probably reward whoever could pin Harry down in the same manner as Bellatrix had right now. As Bellatrix pressed her wand to her Dark Mark, she stiffened and shuddered a little bit. He'd heard that activating the Dark Mark to call Tom was a painful process but Bellatrix seemed to enjoy it. Somehow that wasn't all the surprising.

As Harry watched, Bellatrix suddenly went slack and had to stop herself from falling over as she removed her wand from the Dark Mark on her left forearm. She smirked weakly at Harry but he ignored her, waiting for what he knew was coming. As if on cue, his scar began to ache before it began to almost burn with pain. Gritting his teeth, Harry channelled a small amount of magic into one of his runes and the pain suddenly left his body. Instead he wanted to hold the side of his head against the sudden and terrible headache. It was better though, he reflected, because the headache was already beginning to lessen.

Dark clouds formed incredibly quickly from what Harry could see through the holes in the roof of the Hogs Head. Too fast to be natural that was to be sure. It was confirmed for Harry when one of the clouds took the shape of the Dark Mark, the snake tongue reaching out and moving. From the tongue a black cloud detached, rocketing towards the ground. It wasn't a cloud at all of course; it was the strange type of transportation magic that the Death Eaters used whenever they wanted to really make an entrance, a form of visible and slow disapparation.

Harry didn't flinch when the darkest little stream of cloud landed a few feet in front of him, beside Bellatrix. Even before the smoke cleared, Bellatrix was bowing down low to the person they both knew had just arrived. With a mild pulse of magic, the smoke disappeared to reveal a bald, pale, figure dressed in flowing dark

robes. Held loosely, almost carelessly, in the figure's pale hand was a white wand, almost bleached of all colour. Lord Voldemort turned to Harry, ignoring Bellatrix's presence as his serpentine eyes locked onto Harry's restrained form. Harry met his mortal enemy's gaze with his own, not flinching at all as he looked at perhaps the most powerful dark wizard in the past hundred years or so. For a moment neither of them spoke, content just to stare into the eyes of their enemy. After a few seconds, Harry was the one to speak,

"Hello Tom." He greeted the dark lord, not using his made-up title. Voldemort flinched a little bit in anger but otherwise did not react, still smiling a little bit. Harry nodded to Bellatrix, "Thanks for lending 'Trixie to dance with me but I'm afraid she's not that good a dancer."

While Bellatrix glared at him from her position of bowing at her master's feet, Voldemort laughed. It was a cruel and high pitched sound that set Harry's teeth on edge but he managed to not show it on his face,

"I apologise Harry..." he drawled, confidence and mocking sarcasm dripping from every word he spoke, "It seems that she was a little bit rough with you. Nothing broken I hope?"

Voldemort reached out with his thin, claw-like, fingers and took hold of Harry's head by his chin, turning the his head from side to side forcibly to examine him. Tutting, Voldemort patted Harry on the cheek mockingly. Looking into Voldemort's eyes, Harry suddenly smiled, surprising both Voldemort and Bellatrix,

"You know Tom... I'm glad you could make it to the party!" he made a show of looking around the wrecked interior of the Hogs Head before chuckling darkly, "Sorry about the mess but it seems you've arrived just when it's died the death."

Seeing his attempts at conversation and the smile as attempts at bravado, Voldemort chuckled. It was a sound just as unpleasant as his laugh but not as high pitch. He turned to Bellatrix,

"The boy yet has some strength..." he smirked mockingly, "Does he not Bellatrix?"

The faithful Death Eater almost fell over herself in her hurry to agree with him, nodding madly,

"Yes indeed my master..." she agreed before quickly deciding to add, "But it's nothing you can't take from him with but a whim my lord."

Happy with her answer, Voldemort turned back to Harry, who was straining to keep himself from laughing. The self-styled Dark Lord frowned a little bit at the expression on Harry's face,

"I do not know what you find so amusing Harry Potter..." he drawled, gesturing at how he was bound to the wall with his wand casually, "There is no chance for you to run away from me this time... this time you will not escape, you will die. Oh you silly boy... was it really worth it? Getting drunk to celebrate your weak little godfather's innocence? Was it worth dying?"

Harry couldn't contain himself and he began to laugh. It wasn't even the hysterical laughter you'd expect to hear from a person who knew they were dead anyway, it was an even and measured laugh of someone who knew something others didn't. When he finished laughing he grinned at both Voldemort and Bellatrix,

"I was never drunk." He revealed to the pair of them, loving the way Bellatrix's eyes widened and Voldemort's narrowed to slits, "It was just easier to pretend that I was. Let people underestimate me and all that."

Voldemort snorted contemptuously at the idea on the outside but it was clear that he was marginally unsettled by the idea that his caged prey had somehow allowed itself to be caught. Of course, neither Voldemort nor Bellatrix thought Harry smart enough to do anything of the sort so they relaxed a little bit. Before Voldemort could speak, Harry spoke up again,

"I actually have something I want to tell you Tom..." he looked at the dark lord, tilting his head to the side curiously, "You do give people the right to their last words don't you?"

This was something that Voldemort obviously had a lot of experience in and he smirked once again, obviously assured that the strangeness of finding out that Harry had faked being drunk was just an isolated incident. He bowed his head graciously but it was obviously meant with a mocking undertone,

"But of course Harry! After all..." he looked Harry in the eyes again and the captive boy could see the barely contained joy, "I have been waiting for this for so many years... a few more moments will not matter."

Smiling, blatantly ignoring Voldemort's obvious undertone, Harry collected his thoughts. He looked his adversary in the eyes as he spoke,

"I'm not sure how much you know about muggle history Tom, but when the Japanese attacked the Americans at Pearl Harbour they used two sets of code phrases." He began with a small smile, "One to commence the operation and another to confirm the operation's success. With me so far?"

Intrigued, Voldemort waved his hand casually at Harry in a gesture that obviously meant that he could continue. The Dark Lord was apparently interested as to where Harry was going with this,

"Now the code phrase to commence the operation was Climb Mt. Nitaka." He smiled at the confused look on Voldemort's face, "When the commander said 'Climb Mt. Nitaka' the country was committed to the war. But!"

He paused and both Voldemort and Bellatrix were seen to be annoyed by the sudden stop. Harry grinned a little bit and began to work on pulling his magic to his chest area, where his wand was tucked into his breast pocket from Bellatrix's earlier mocking. He continued,

"When the first Japanese pilots confirmed that they had caught the Americans they sent out another code phrase..." his eyes glowed suddenly as he tapped into one of his runes, instantly doubling his magical core's stores and accessibility, "Tora! Tora! Tora!"

It was clear, to any impartial observer that the fight was over.

In the centre of a now thoroughly ruined street, Avery and Sirius Black stood opposite each other. Neither man was looking particularly healthy but it was clear that Avery was the one in better condition. He was covered in soot, ash and the remains of rubble but his only noticeable injury was a large slash across his chest. It

wasn't particularly deep but it was a large wound. Less noticeable to an observer, but very noticeable to Avery, were the three broken ribs and fractured left wrist.

But his injuries were nothing compared to his opponent.

Sirius Black was in a terrible state, he too was covered in ash and rubble but where Avery was merely dusted in it, Sirius was caked in it, dried blood turning the light plaster dust dark brown. His right shoulder was dislocated again after yet another of Avery's banishing charms, having been weakened considerably from the first dislocated and the subsequent re-setting. A few of his teeth were missing, his mouth constantly filling up with blood from the dental damage and from some internal bleeding. He wasn't sure but he thought that his right ankle was shattered as it hurt like holy hell whenever there was even the illusion of weight put on it. Dozens of cuts and gashes littered his body from when Avery had decided to play with him, using weak cutting curses that Sirius was unable to avoid in his decimated state.

Right now, Sirius wasn't even touching the ground. He was hovering inches above the ground under a spell so simple that it was almost impossible to use on a person.

Wingardium Leviosa.

The first year spell was able to levitate Sirius' weakened form because there just wasn't enough magic in his body to disrupt the Death Eater's charm. It would have only taken the power of a weak first year to break out of the spell but Sirius' control had been so sloppy in his drunken state that in the fifteen minutes they'd been fighting, he'd emptied his magical core entirely. He had about as much magic in him right now as a peanut. There were currently muggles with more magic than him at this moment in time. They both knew this, hence Avery's exceedingly arrogant stance, both hands now in his pockets as he merely smiled smugly,

"The great Sirius Black..." he laughed a little bit, "They warned me about you! Said you were the most creative duellist the Order had... said you would turn little pieces of stone into exploding insects! Windows would become insulting pictures! They said it would be chaos to fight you!"

Sirius didn't say anything but, to be fair, his injuries were of such a calibre that he probably wouldn't have made much sense even if he did speak. His chest was tight so it was safe to assume that his ribs were either broken or bruised. To be honest it didn't really matter which at the moment, both possibilities were equally dangerous to his continued health. Tired of his captive's silence, Avery growled a little bit before taking a quick step forwards, slamming his fist into Sirius' unprotected gut. Sirius groaned in pain and spat out a small amount of blood but otherwise did not react at all. Reaching forwards, Avery grabbed hold of Sirius' hair tightly and pulled his head back so that he could look his weakened captive in the eyes,

"You are pathetic!" he punched Sirius across the face again, letting the other man's head go, "You were supposed to be a great fighter! I was supposed to kill you and gain glory for doing so!"

He punched Sirius in the face again and took some satisfaction in that the other wizard paused for a moment before weakly spitting out another tooth. Avery began to pace up and down in front of his beaten opponent. Each step just compounded his anger. Sirius hadn't put up enough of a fight for the other Death Eaters to be impressed by Avery when he came in with proof that he'd killed the man. In the Death Eaters if someone wasn't hard to kill, but you still wanted to show a show of strength, you made their death long, slow and memorable. Avery was not a terribly imaginative man but he imagined that cutting the man's body repeatedly and letting him bleed out slowly from hundreds of wounds was the way to go. Taking out a small dagger, Avery moved closer to his captured prey, intent on carving him up slowly and painfully.

"Repulso!"

The twin shouts were so close together that Avery could be forgiven for thinking that it was actually only one voice that had rang out in the stillness of the street. But when two very heavy banishing charms connected with him, one in the left shoulder and the other in the gut, there was little doubt in his mind that he had been ambushed by multiple enemies. He had no more time for thought however as the two banishing charms flung him across the street, slamming him into the side of a building.

Fred and George Weasley revealed themselves, dropping the disillusionment charms that had kept them from being seen. Sirius'

eyes widened even as he was released from his captivity. He coughed as he fell to his knees, still completely and utterly exhausted. One of the twins, Fred, moved past Sirius and began to pepper the ground around Avery with blasting curses to keep the Death Eater on his toes. The other, George, moved to Sirius' side and helped the older prankster unsteadily to his feet. Standing, but leaning heavily on George, Sirius grinned weakly,

"Took you two long enough!" he joked in a raspy voice, "Any longer and I'd be Sirius Jerky!"

George shook his head a little bit, oddly serious for him, and preceded to half-lead and half-carry Sirius over to one of the broken shells of buildings. The half-destroyed sign above the door proudly remained, defiantly declaring that the roofless building had been Zonko's Joke Shop. Even as he was helped to sit down with his back against a wall, Sirius thought it was ironic for a prankster to be given safety within the walls of a joke shop.

While George was helping Sirius to get behind some cover, Fred was fighting with the now rather angry Avery. It was clear from the fact that Avery was firing significantly more spells than Fred that the teenager was not as skilled as his older opponent. But even so, Avery's weakened state meant that while he was able to fire off more spells, and darker ones too, he was unable to make them nearly as powerful as Fred could. And Avery was the one thing that Fred was not; predictable. When Avery cast another killing curse, Fred dodged and aimed his next spell to the ground a few yards to the right of where Avery was,

"Bombarda!" he called out forcefully. The blasting curse hit the ground, kicking up a huge amount of the paving. And Avery had, as he always had in the fight, moved to his left so that he was stood right in front of the spell's impact zone. With the cover of dust and broken cement, Fred gritted his teeth, "Combasta!"

The genius of the Weasley twins was not usually in battle, it was in pranks and jokes. To a lesser extent though it was also in fireworks and small explosives. The combasta spell wasn't a combat spell per se, it was a firework spell that caused a jet of bright red light to shoot towards Avery before exploding close to the man, sending him flying. As Avery was flung through the air, Fred turned back to where his twin had hidden Sirius,

"George-y! I could sure use you out here!" he called out to his brother, "We need to use that spell we were working on!"

George grinned at his twin's words while Sirius just looked confused. The ginger teenager gave Sirius a cheeky grin as he stood up,

"You'll want to watch this old timer. This is the future of pranking." He declared proudly before jogging out to stand beside his brother. He clapped Fred on the shoulder; not taking his eyes off of Avery's landing site, "You ready for this Freddie?"

"You know it George-y!" he replied with a quick glance and a grin at his twin, which earned him a similar expression from his twin, "You ready to really shove it to those old farts in the safety control for fireworks office?"

As Avery was seen picking himself up from a pile of rubble that had once been a small nursery, Fred and George began to pull on as much magic as they could. Fred's wand began to glow a bright red with repressed magical energy even as George's wand began to glow a bright white, so bright that it was impossible to look at it head on. Both wands were pointed towards Avery. Fred grinned viciously,

"You ready for this Avery?" he roared over the sound of their wildly humming wands, "The first Fred-George special attack!"

"A prank that is quite literally a blast! But it's more than a prank..." George continued with a feral grin, "This is art god damn it! And art... is a blast!"

"Combasta/Aerous Draconis!"

From George's glowing white wand, a blast of powerful wind burst forwards at incredibly speeds. But even as fast as it was going it was clearly in the shape of a Chinese dragon, it's mouth open in a soundless roar of rage. Fred's spell was built along the lines of his firework spell from before but it too formed a large Chinese dragon. And when the two dragons overlapped... hell broke out.

The wind dragon was special in that the reason why it took so much magic was that it was made out of pure oxygen. And when pure oxygen was made to react with a flame, or a firework in this case, it

reacted very violently indeed, fuelling the fire. The dragon became a dragon of pure fire, easily three times the size of either the wind dragon or the fireworks dragon.

In an instant the fight was over. Avery didn't have time to get out of the way and the attack hit him dead on. There was a muffled scream for about two seconds before it stopped abruptly, the entire area being bathed in a huge amount of powerful flames. Both Fred and George dived behind the wall Sirius was using for cover when the dragon exploded outwards, fire coming off from the impact site in waves.

Showing their prankster side, and perhaps more than a little bit of fear of what they're created, the spell finished itself with a large mushroom-shaped cloud of smoke that burst upwards. As the spell ended the dust cloud, and several small spots of fire, remained. Fred glanced around the wall to where they had last seen Avery and his eyes widened in fright. George looked too and he too was shocked, sitting down and looking at his hands.

Avery hadn't been killed by the attack, he'd been completely destroyed by it. Or rather, most of him had. There was only a skeleton standing there now, melted in place and heated so much that it appeared to have crystallised. A swift wind hit the skeleton and it peeled away, breaking into dust and flying away on the wind. Fred turned to his twin with an ashen expression. George looked sick to his stomach. It confused Sirius, they'd been excited about the spell before, did they not expect this? Fred held out a hand and George took it,

"Now, I am become Death..." Fred began but trailed off, not able to complete the quote. Sirius recognised it though and he suddenly realised why the boys were so strange. They had created a spell that, in the hands of someone more powerful than the two of them, could destroy things on a scale similar to an atomic bomb. A spell that powerful had never existed before in the wizarding world and now it was a reality. George finished the quote, having found the energy to speak,

"The destroyer of worlds."

Cobalt pulled his hand out of another Death Eater's chest, his pointed hand coming free with a slick squelch. The dying wizard fell

to the ground, hands uselessly flailing at the hole dead centre in the man's chest. It took only a few seconds more before the man to die, the blood loss and the damage to his lungs too much for his body to handle. With careless and callous disregard for the man's dignity in death, Cobalt kicked the man's body out of the second floor window which had been blown open hours ago.

There was a hollow thud and a small cracking sound that told Cobalt that the man's skull had probably not survived the fall.

Casting a quick water spell on his hand, Cobalt went about cleaning his hand as he stood guard in what had once been a home's master bedroom. He took the opportunity to look around the room and reflected that it had once been rather tastefully decorated. The walls had been covered, expertly he might add, in light coloured wallpaper and the carpet had been soft and, in all likelihood, rather expensive. After the first fireball had been shot into the room, through the destroyed window, the room had become gradually less aesthetically pleasing. It had been followed by a few blasting curses, which had torn up the wallpaper very effectively but hadn't even made the room's occupants even look up from their tasks.

The first Death Eater had burst into the room expecting to find perhaps some scared little children and their mother or something. Instead as soon as he'd burst through the door, Cobalt had stabbed his hand into the man's stomach, cutting straight through to the spine, before slashing his throat open with a cutting curse. He had probably died before he had even reached the floor but that wasn't really his concern.

Footsteps on the stairs alerted Cobalt to yet more people trying to achieve entry to the room. To be honest he wasn't even sure why they were trying to get in. It wasn't a strong tactical position because the window had been blown out so completely that it was very open if you wanted to lay down fire. And it wasn't an important building; it was a two bedroom home. It didn't even have a floo connection for Merlin's sake! Muttering about incompetent enemies, Cobalt straightened his empty right hand into a point in the same way that he had when he had made holes in the chests of every person to attack the room.

As the footsteps grew closer, Cobalt focused on his magic, pulling it more into his right arm and hand than the rest of his body. Normally this would achieve nothing but Cobalt had spent almost every waking hour of his life exercising his control over his magic. To the extent that right now the magic swimming around in his right arm and hand began to move, pouring into the muscles and his bones, strengthening them to inhuman levels for as long as he kept the flow of magic going.

The door opened and the white mask of a Death Eater was enough for Cobalt to feel that attacking was a viable option. Cobalt charged across the distance between himself and the startled Death Eater. Showing a remarkable awareness by not getting tunnel vision, Cobalt ducked under the man's panicked torture curse and was unopposed in the last foot to his target. He thrust forwards with his right arm with more power than he would ever be able to achieve naturally. His hand broke the skin easily, tore through the man's muscles, snapped a rib and came to rest, his fingers stuck in the Death Eater's heart half-way.

As the dark wizard spat up some blood from the obviously fatal injury, Cobalt noticed that he wasn't alone. A second Death Eater, who had arrived behind the first one, had his wand pointed at Cobalt with the electric red of the torture curse dancing at it's tip. Acting on instinct, Cobalt used the fact that the first Death Eater was still impaled on his hand to pull the dying man's body in the path of the spell just in time. The dying Death Eater twitched and spasmed violently when the torture curse hit him, spitting, coughing and generally spluttering blood up, covering Cobalt as he was using the man's body as cover.

Ignoring the blood that splashed onto his face, Cobalt held the dying and twitching Death Eater up in front of him with his right arm, only able to use him as a shield so easily thanks to his added strength. He looked around the man's neck to see the second Death Eater and he pressed his wand into his shield's stomach. The second Death Eater was, understandably, a little shaken up but it didn't matter too much because Cobalt hadn't even flinched. Using a wordless spell, Cobalt caused a metal pole, about a foot long, to shoot out of the end of his wand. Of course he was using the first Death Eater as a shield so it first tore through his stomach, showering Cobalt's lower body with even more blood. Having barely slowed down when flying through the first man, the metal pole had

no trouble in slamming into the second Death Eater's left thigh, pinning the man to the wall behind him.

As the pinned man screamed in pain, Cobalt narrowed his eyes and fired the spell again. Another pole forced its way through his shield to slam into the second wizard's stomach, helping to effectively pin the man to the wall. Again, Cobalt fired, and a pole shot through the first man to pin the right shoulder of the trapped Death Eater to the wall. Cobalt looked into the Death Eater's eyes through the mask as he adjusted his wand slightly. He could see that the man obviously feared for his life but Cobalt had no mercy for someone who enjoyed killing people weaker than themselves. Cobalt narrowed his eyes and fired the spell off again, just as the Death Eater opened his mouth to beg for his life.

As the final metal rod pinned the weakly struggling man to the wall, Cobalt thought it ironic that, in this case, the dark wizard seemed to have 'eaten' his death.

Closing the door quietly and calmly, as if he hadn't just killed two dark wizards with both shocking brutality and complete ease, Cobalt wrinkled his nose when he realised just how covered he was in blood. He spared the tiny bit of magic to perform a cleaning charm on himself and moved back to the corner of the room he had occupied before, along the wall from the door and across from Richard. Speaking of his fellow 'tutor'...

Richard was sat in the corner opposite Cobalt, his wand neatly placed on the ground in front of him as he sat in the classic lotus position. His eyes were closed and his breathing was deep and even. He was sat in the middle of a ring of salt, which had been poured down after the two of them had torn up the carpet at that corner of the room. Even though Cobalt was making no noise and Richard was only breathing, there was a slight humming noise in the air and it was coming from Richard. Unlike muggles who meditated, Richard wasn't making the noise to concentrate further, nor was he actively trying to make the sound. Richard was just channelling so much of his magic that so of it was bleeding out into the room as sound. It would normally bleed out as light, making him glow, but the specially prepared ring of salt was amplifying not his magical power but his control.

And he needed all the control he could get.

Cobalt slowly began to retract the magic from his right arm, so as to not damage the muscles and weakened the bones. It was a process that required a level of concentration that few ever achieved but it paled in comparison to the level of control that Richard had to exercise. Not only that but Richard's spell was incredibly draining on the magical core and required his constant attention, hence the meditation. Cursing the fact that his technique caused his arm to experience pins and needles all over, Cobalt flexed his arm from shoulder to fingers in an attempt to get the feeling back faster.

It was his job, as part of the plan, to protect Richard no matter what the cost. Harry had even gone as far as to give him permission to destroy the building they were in, and several nearby buildings, if it meant that Richard was kept safe and uninterrupted. Richard's task was vital for the plan to work so Cobalt's job was just as vital. Plus he was being paid a very large amount of money to do this. That tended to help.

Overall though it was a good plan, he mused as he began to idly play with his wand in his left hand. It was well thought out at the very least and was a major step up from Dumbledore's old stand by; do nothing. He yawned a little bit as he waited for Richard to actually do anything. His partner in this part of the plan was supposed to be in this near-comatose state until the trap had been sprung so Cobalt was waiting for his friend to move so that he could start working against the Death Eater forces. Richard's job at the moment was as simple in theory as it was hard in practice; simulating a panicked population.

Harry had not been able to justify letting real people die for his plan to succeed when there was even a chance that it could come up nothing so he had entertained suggestions as to how to keep the civilians out of harms way while still attracting the Death Eaters in force. Aberforth had made a suggestion of giving them all portkeys to somewhere else as soon as the Death Eaters arrived but it was shot down when it was decided that the Death Eaters would have had to make some progress before Voldemort himself would show up. Daphne had suggested that the support members would polyjuice themselves into civilians to populate the party but this had been vetoed as well when it was decided that the Death Eaters would have grown suspicious if civilians had been able to survive

their attack. In the end, Richard had told them of a rather experimental spell he'd been working on.

The civilians running through the streets being chased by Death Eaters, the civilians laying dead on the ground and even the civilians cowering in fear in buildings were not civilians at all. Richard had developed a transfiguration spell of magnificent power and concentration that a ritual circle was required for the spell to be used properly. The civilians populating the town at the moment were not civilians, they weren't even human. They were inanimate, unfeeling, logs. Wood that had been transfigured into human shape by Richard, each one with a unique appearance, and charmed with the instructions to act as a regular human would do. The charm itself was not enough however, so Richard had to push his own consciousness into each and every transfigured chunk of wood so that they would act as human as possible as much as possible.

Cobalt had to admit that the effects were amazing. He'd seen a Death Eater cut a 'civilian' in half with a cutting curse and blood, along with other things, had flown everywhere. What was impressive was that the blood appeared to be real. It wasn't some kind of active illusion; Richard had turned every log of wood into a fully functioning human body. He made the distinction of body as the creations lacked brainwaves, hence why Richard was having to direct each and every one of them.

Just as Cobalt was beginning to feel the effects of boredom, fighting them off as he did so, Richard jerked slightly. Cobalt was instantly alert again as Richard hadn't moved a muscle since beginning the spell. Gripping his wand tightly in his left hand, Cobalt waited for something to happen, knowing that anything could happen with an experimental spell. Thankfully though it was very anticlimactic.

Richard glowed slightly, a faint magical aura appearing around him in a bright electric blue colour, before the salt ring disappeared in a flash. Cobalt blinked a few times as his partner opened his eyes and blinked owlishly a few times. They looked at each other for a second before Richard spoke,

"Tora, tora, tora." He declared clearly, knowing the Cobalt knew what it meant. Cobalt grinned a little bit, ready to take the fight to the Death Eaters instead of merely protecting someone from attacks,

"Alright..." he looked at Richard, who had yet to move from the lotus position, "You up for this? Can you get up?"

Richard fell onto his side after a few seconds of struggling to move himself out of the lotus position. From his position on his side, the German man glared at Cobalt, who found himself smirking,

"Tell anyone about this and I swear to God I'll turn you into a mouse."

Fenrir Greyback and Remus Lupin were both bloody, torn, ragged messes of men, clothes, skin and muscles torn up from the collision of their two spells and the resulting explosion. It had sent them both flying backwards into, and through, the outer walls of some of the surrounding buildings. Having both pulled themselves out of the ruins with inhuman willpower and endurance, both of the werewolves stood glaring at each other, neither willing to waste any precious energy being the first one to attack again. Suddenly both sets of sensitive werewolf ears picked up a shout from a familiar voice.

Tora.

Tora.

Tora.

In that second, Remus suddenly seemed to find energy to spare. Charging forwards with nothing but the desire to destroy the creature responsible for all the pain in his life, Remus threw a brick that hit Fenrir's gut. With the older werewolf doubled over, Remus flicked his wand upwards. The banishing charm grew from the ground, moving up at incredible speeds to slam into Fenrir's mouth. Remus didn't pause in his reckless charge, even when Fenrir growled and spat out a tooth, and slammed his shoulder into the older man's chest. Fenrir's back smashed into a brick wall and he howled it pain.

In response, Fenrir acted as he always did; like an animal. Growling loudly and as angrily as he could, the savage man reached forwards and bit into Remus' shoulder. The younger werewolf roared in pain, repeatedly punching the older on in the stomach in an attempt to keep from being gnawed on. Stubbornly, Fenrir refused to be moved

and instead bit down harder to keep his grip. Growing more desperate to be free, Remus used all of the strength in his right arm to punch Fenrir again, this time in a much more sensitive area.

The fearsome Fenrir Greyback let out a pained yelp, much like a kicked puppy, and his jaw relaxed enough for Remus to push the large man off of him. Gritting his teeth, Remus clamped his right hand down on his injured left shoulder, cursing the fact that he'd never really learnt any healing charms. Fenrir wobbled on his feet however, struggling not to fall over from the sudden pain in his most sensitive area. Before either werewolf could think about attacking the other again, a blasting curse hit Fenrir square in the chest, lifting him up as it flung him through the air like a ragdoll.

Remus turned to where the spell had come from and saw Bill Weasley jogging over to his side. The werewolf couldn't help the small sigh of relief that came from seeing that he did have back up now. Fenrir Greyback was a savage opponent after all and Remus was not sure that he had the endurance to outlast him, even with his condition giving him extra energy. When the red-headed man was closer, he smiled a little at Remus,

"You alright there Remus?" he asked with a lightly joking tone, "You look like you've been turned into a chew toy."

The joke was bad, and probably in bad taste, but Remus still managed a little bit of a laugh anyway, at the absurdity of joking during a battle if nothing else. Shaking his head, Remus winced a little bit when the movement aggravated his shoulder wound. He looked at Bill,

"Got any healing spells Bill?" he asked before wincing again, "This hurts more than it tickles..."

Bill nodded and the tip of his wand began to glow a light green. Just as he was about to touch his wand to Remus' shoulder a bubbling laugh began from the pile of rubble that Bill had managed to blast Fenrir into. Swearing, the Weasley tapped Remus' shoulder a bit harder than intended. Remus hissed in pain but merely grunted at the skin and muscles torn apart by Fenrir's bite stitched themselves together. Both men turned to the rubble pile in time to see the disgusting sight of Fenrir staggering out of the rubble.

Fenrir was not looking good on taking a blasting curse to the chest, it was a spell designed to blast apart rocks after all. His shirt was long gone now but the skin of his chest seemed to have peeled outwards from where the spell had impacted. The actual impact site of the spell was now completely skinless, showing freely bleeding muscles and bones. The damage done to Fenrir was enough that he'd most certainly die without medical attention and the way he was laughing weakly was just evidence that the older man had gone into shock. Reaching into his pocket, Fenrir held up a single syringe for their inspection,

"Do you see this?" he asked his opponents, shaking the syringe to show the light yellow liquid inside, "This... is the key to my species domination of the human race! The Dark Lord is generous... he gave us captured muggle scientists to work on our greatest ambition... the ability to change at will!"

Remus' eyes widened and Bill took a small step back in surprise. The thought of Fenrir Greyback and his pack of like-minded werewolves, able to change into their wolf forms at will was terrifying. Remus was unable to stop himself from gritting his teeth in anger. Greyback would, no doubt, use it in order to bite and infect children more effectively, like he'd infected Remus when he was young. Bill wasn't as emotionally involved in this development as Remus was but he knew well enough that it was not something that the wizarding world would survive. Staring at the yellow liquid, Bill frowned,

"You're bluffing." He declared, gaining surprised and angry looks from Remus and Fenrir respectively, "There's no way for a werewolf to change of his own will."

Fenrir growled a little bit before scowling, as if acknowledging his point,

"The whelp is right unfortunately..." he growled out before grinning savagely again, "But with one injection each time we can! The muggle called it something... a hormone! The change is triggered by a hormone that we produce only under the full moon... and by injecting it we can change!"

To emphasis his point, Fenrir stabbed the syringe into his arm and pushed the plunger down. As the yellow liquid disappeared into

Fenrir's blood stream, his body stiffened before cracks could be heard as his body began to twist, deform and grow into the body of a werewolf. His body grew taller and thinner, his face elongated to include a snout and fangs. His hands and feet grow large and claws popped out through the skin of the fingertips. The transformation complete, Fenrir tilted his head back and roared loudly.

Remus and Bill gripped their wands tightly; their throats suddenly dry at the thought of having to fight the most vicious werewolf in recent history. The Weasley turned to the untransformed werewolf and they shared a significant glance before the two of them thrust their wands forwards at the same time,

"Repulso!" they both cried at the same time, sending two banishing charms smashing into the chest of the beast before them. Fenrir growled angrily as he was sent sprawling into the pile of rubble he'd emerged from not long ago. Falling onto all fours, Fenrir charged at the two wizards in front of him. Bill gripped his wand tightly,

"Gracio!" he cried out, a large icicle shooting from his wand at high speeds. Fenrir dodged the icicle but that left him in the path of Remus' fire spell. The transformed werewolf roared in pain and anger; more in anger seeing as it's skin was at least somewhat fireproof. Bursting through the flames in an amazing display of speed, Fenrir slammed into Remus' unsuspecting form. Remus swore loudly as the creature pounced on him. Using his wand he was able to use a localised banishing charm to push Fenrir's head away from him. Even with the force of the continuous spell, Fenrir's fangs were growing closer and closer to his throat,

"Diffindo!" Bill cried, cutting a dark red line up the length of Fenrir's unprotected side with the cutting curse. The werewolf howled in pain and Bill jabbed his wand at it powerfully, "Repulso!"

The banishing charm caught Fenrir in the already bleeding side and sent the creature sprawling in a heap of unorganised limbs by the roadside, struggling to get back up. Helping Remus to his feet, the two of them took the chance to catch their breath. The red head turned to the untransformed werewolf,

"He's just going to keep coming..." he predicted with a grimace, "We'll run out of magic a lot sooner than he'll run out of physical

strength and the hide of a werewolf is so thick it's resistant to most spells... suggestions?"

Remus was about to answer when Fenrir charged at them again, now fully recovered apparently. Gripping his wand tightly, he jabbed it at the creature barrelling towards him. The banishing charm hit Fenrir in the face but he carried on charging towards Remus with his fangs bared. Thinking quickly, Remus pointed his wand at the ground,

"Repulso!" he cried out, firing the banishing charm at the ground by his feet and holding onto his wand tightly. The banishing charm hit the floor and flung Remus up into the air a few feet, just enough to clear the flailing Fenrir. Bill used the opportunity to hit the werewolf with another blasting curse, succeeding in getting more damage to the beast's tough hide. Before it could charge after Bill for the attack, Remus hit it with a stunning spell, using as much of his magic as possible. The red spell hit the werewolf and Fenrir growled in frustration as his movements slowed to a speed that both Bill and Remus were able to easily dodge. Both of them moved back together as Fenrir fought the effects of the spell. Bill turned to Remus again,

"Charlie is a dragon keeper in Romania... he said that whenever they wanted to restrain a dragon they chained it down with magical chains." He told Remus, keeping a careful eye on Fenrir as the beast worked through the spell, "Can you do the 'Vinculis aurum' spell?"

Remus thought about it for a moment, checking his magical reserves to see if he had enough raw magic to even attempt the spell in question. He nodded with a small frown,

"Yes but I've only got enough juice left to fire it off once..." he paused and gave Bill a meaningful glance, "I mean it Bill. After this spell I will be lucky I don't pass out or die from severe magical exhaustion... you need to finish the fight with the opening I give you."

Now set on a course of action, Bill and Remus jumped away from each other as Fenrir charged past where they had been stood only a moment before. Turning around as he finished his fruitless charge,

Fenrir roared at Remus and rushed toward him again, dropping to all fours to make the charge faster,

"Ready?" he called out to Bill before pointing his wand at Fenrir, "Vinculis aurum!"

Immediately, Remus felt literally all of his remaining magic disappear into the spell, leaving him feeling nauseous and empty. A split second later, bright golden chains burst up through the ground, wrapping themselves around Fenrir's arms and legs. The werewolf howled and pulled at the chains. It was an exercise in futility however as the chains just pulled back harder, pulling the werewolf into a spread-eagled position. As Remus fell to his knees, coughing up blood from the sudden depletion of his magic, Bill stepped up between Remus and Fenrir,

"Diffindo!" he called out, slashing his wand down savagely to emphasis the effect. A red line appeared across Fenrir's unprotected chest but it barely bled, showing that the wound was shallow at best. Bill cursed himself, trying to think of a spell that would not only get through the beast's tough skin but also do enough damage to kill him. He thought about using the rumpo spell but decided against it, knowing that it wouldn't be able to get through the werewolf's skin. As he thought about it, only one spell came to mind, a powerful offensive curse that his team had found as a defence to an Egyptian tomb a few years ago. It was a spell so powerful that it had carved through the stone and still cut through one of the people in his team. The problem, as he saw it, was that he only just had enough magic to perform it; half of his full magical core was required. Building up the energy, he held his wand above his head with both hands, as if it was a sword he was preparing for an overhead strike, "Dear merlin I hope I have enough magic for this..."

Bright silver light began to grow around the tip of Bill's wand, causing the wand to begin to vibrate with the contained energy of the spell. Gritting his teeth he slashed downwards at Fenrir with both hands,

"Icircumflex argenti!" he roared as a giant blade of silver magic, shaped like a crescent, screamed towards Fenrir, tearing a huge gouge in the ground as it sped towards him. The silver spell cut through Fenrir's hardened hide like a hot knife through butter, cutting the transformed werewolf clear in half down the middle before

carrying on. Continuing on, the crescent didn't burn out until it had cut halfway through a house on the other side of the street. The spell simply disappeared when it was done, leaving a massive trench from it's path, two gory halves of Fenrir's transformed body and the front half of a house with a similar trench through it. Seeing that the spell had worked, Bill's shoulders slumped and he fell to his knees for a second before keeling over and lying unmoving on the ground.

Panicked by the boy's sudden lack of movement, Remus tried to pull himself to his feet and fell back onto his knees rather painfully. He tried to crawl towards his ally when the world began to swim in front of his eyes. Without another sound, Remus collapsed as well.

Activating the multiplier rune on his body was easy enough considering all of his runic tattoos were connected directly to his magical core. His wand glowed bright blue, blinding both Voldemort and Bellatrix. Using the distraction, Harry used his wand without wand motions from the contact it had with his chest. Immediately he fell away from the wall, turning the decent into a roll which saved him from several blind killing curses from Voldemort himself.

As Harry stopped the roll his wand flew to his hand, ripping through his shirt pocket to land in his right hand with a small smack. Voldemort and Bellatrix both had their wands trained on him now and were both going to fire some rather nasty spells and curses at him. Harry, his eyes glowing bright green with the excess magic rushing through his body, merely smirked. The facial expression must have given Voldemort some warning because he immediately jumped away from where he'd been standing.

Several spells and curses crashed into the ground where the Dark Lord had been standing not two seconds before. Bellatrix whipped round to deal with those who would dare to attack her Lord but was immediately put on the defensive by the almost continuous spellfire that came her way. She was able to erect a hexagonal based shield that stopped most of the curses but a powerful blasting curse shattered the shield and set her stumbling backward. Harry laughed,

"Nice one Neville!" he congratulated his friend as the smoke cleared enough to reveal who had decided to crash the party, "About time you guys got here..."

Daphne and Susan merely smiled and quickly crossed the room to stand beside Harry; wands at the ready in defend him if they needed to. Neville, Tracey and Luna stood in one of the holes in the building's walls. Aberforth was also there, standing in front of Neville's group with a small aura of blue power, more evidence that Albus wasn't the only powerful Dumbledore out there. Harry rolled his neck to loosen his muscles up a little bit and dropped into a light duelling stance, a stance that promoted movement and flexibility.

Both Daphne and Susan gave him significant looks when they saw that his eyes were glowing and Harry had to fight the urge to scratch the back of his head sheepishly. The plan, a hybrid creation from Harry and the slytherins he knew, had called for him to call the attack before he was forced to use any of his amplification runes. As Voldemort glided back to stand beside Bellatrix, batting aside one of Neville's blasting curses with contempt, Harry narrowed his glowing eyes and pushed Daphne and Susan lightly towards Neville. Daphne opened her mouth to protest and Harry fixed her with a look that made her duck her head before nodding and moving to support Neville and the others. Aberforth moved to stand beside Harry,

"Riddle!" he called out to the self-styled Dark Lord, "What's say you fight me and Lord Potter away from here? Or are you afraid? Do you need your little minions to fight for you?"

Without warning Voldemort lashed out at the two of them with a flame whip that unravelled from the tip of his wand to slash down at where Aberforth had been stood not two seconds before. In retaliation, Harry fired a cutting curse at his enemy. Voldemort went to bat it away with a wandless shield but Harry's boost in power was enough that even with such a weak spell he overcame Voldemort's limited wandless potential and lightly cut the Dark Lord on the back of his hand. The Dark Arts user cursed loudly and slashed his wand in Harry's direction, flinging the flame whip at the teenager. The whip was stopped a few inches from Harry's face by a water whip, conjured and control by Aberforth. While the two whips fought it out, Harry capitalised on Voldemort's lack of attention and sent a blasting curse at his enemy.

Caught between losing the battle of magical whips and taking a blasting curse to the side, Voldemort chose to avoid the blasting curse. Cancelling his flame whip, Voldemort slashed his wand at the incoming curse, batting it away with an invisible force. In the same

motion he reformed his flame whip, just in time to use it to block against an overhead lash from Aberforth's water whip. Deciding to help in destroying Voldemort's defence, Harry jabbed his wand hard in Voldemort's direction,

"Aguamenti!" he called out, using the wand motions and the incantation to give the spell more power. With the addition of his increased magical core and the strength of the motions and the words, Harry was forced to hold onto his wand tightly with both hands as a power jet of continuous water rocketed out of his wand. Aiming his wand, the jet of water hit Voldemort's flame whip near the wand where it originated. Steam began to build up as both water spells began to over-power Voldemort's single fire spell. Growling in annoyance, Voldemort ended the flame spell and slashed his wand savagely to the side,

"You'll have to try better than this!" he called out as his wordless spell disrupted both water spells enough that both Harry and Aberforth stopped them, "A goat charmer and a school boy with more luck than judgement... is this all my opposition? The two of you cannot hope to defeat me!"

Harry gripped his wand tighter in his stance but a small part of him knew that what Voldemort was saying was true. As he was right now, Harry was no match for Voldemort in a stand up fight. The only reason he'd even drawn blood from the Dark Lord was because he'd been underestimated and he doubted that Voldemort, insane as he was, had lost enough of his wits to become easy to kill through underestimating Harry. Aberforth put a hand on Harry's shoulder gently, never taking his eyes off of Voldemort,

"This young man is a powerful wizard in his own right Riddle and you know that..." he paused and smirked a little bit, an expression never seen being worn by his brother, "Which is why you're so afraid of him."

The effect of the taunt was immediate and violent. Voldemort roared in anger at the suggestion that he was afraid of anyone, especially Harry Potter, and slashed his wand at the two of them, a large swathe of fiendfyre being sent towards them. Harry ducked under the wave of evil fire and immediately had to roll to the side to avoid taking a killing curse to the chest. He swore when the ground he had been rolling towards exploded violently, sending him flying through

the air before crashing through a downed table. More colourful spells splashed harmlessly against the wall as he hit behind the downed table, revealing that they were curses meant to damage the body internally.

Now Harry was not looking forward to getting hit by any of those spells, not one bit. Deciding that he needed to go on the offensive, Harry fired several metal poles from the tip of his wand at Voldemort. The Dark Lord scowled and waved his wand, turning the three metal poles into snakes, which he then sent flying towards Harry and Aberforth. The Dumbledore barkeeper waved his wand in return and the snakes turned to harmless doves, which flew at Voldemort. Struck by inspiration, and deciding that a dark arts curse was fair game against someone who was sending spells meant to cause hearts to implode, Harry pointed his wand at the group of birds as they neared Voldemort,

"Rumpo!" he cried out. The effect was immediate and messy. The birds, which had originally been meant as a distraction, exploded and their brittle bones acted as shrapnel, raining down on the unsuspecting Voldemort. A roar of pain was heard before all of the remains of the birds simply burnt up into ash. Snarling, Voldemort twirled his wand in the air, a gout of fiendfyre building at the tip but not being released yet. He was building up the flames, Harry realised just as Voldemort sent the deadly fire towards him and Aberforth. As Aberforth fought a losing battle against the cursed fire with a burst of water from his wand, Harry decided to try one of the spells Fred and George had been excited about experimenting on. He gritted his teeth,

"Aerous Draconis!" he roared, sending a dragon of pure oxygen straight at Voldemort. The Dark Lord, having only vaguely heard of this spell, moved some of his fiendfyre to intercept it and immediately regretted it. The result was a massive explosion that sent all three fighters flying through the air. Harry cried out in pain as he was sent through a thin wall and bounced several times along the paving outside, scratching his skin raw as he skidded along. Knowing that Voldemort wouldn't just lie down, even after a hit like that, Harry groaned in pain and pushed himself to his feet just as the wall he'd flown through exploded towards him. Swearing, Harry rolled to the side to avoid the bricks, not confident that he could repel them all with a banishing charm. Voldemort stepped out onto the street, his robes burnt and some of his pale white skin an

unhealthy shade of red that spoke of being too close to a fire for too long,

"Well done Harry!" he called out to his opponent, his voice tinged with anger and hatred, "That spell would have actually killed me, had I been a mere mortal like yourself. But I am not a mere mortal! I am immortal, Harry Potter! What would kill any other man does nothing to me! Do you hear me? Nothing!"

Harry rolled his eyes a little bit as he walked out from behind the wall he'd dived behind. He knew that Voldemort was getting into the mood to monologue right now, like all the villains did in the books and films. That meant he was safe until the monologue was over. He shook his head,

"You're not immortal Tom!" he replied with contempt, causing Voldemort to hiss hatefully at him, "You are just a man! No... a child. You are a child, Tom! Only a child tries to fight the fact that death comes to us all at some point."

This seemed to be one step too far for Voldemort as his magic began to bubble up around him, cracking the paving he was standing on. Being talked down to by an enemy was not something new to a man who had regularly faced down Albus Dumbledore but being talking down to by a teenager, a fifteen year old, was something that Voldemort's pride could not take,

"You are nothing Potter! I will erase you from this world and then we shall see how your views on death change!" he roared in a rage as he wand tip began to glow bright green, "I'm going to send you back to that filthy mud-blood mother of yours!"

A universal constant was that no matter how bad a guy was, they loved their mother on some level. This was especially true for what you might call 'good' guys, who were willing to accept the fact that they loved another human being. So when Voldemort insulted Harry's mother he knew that he was going to get a reaction. Harry gritted his teeth and his wand tip began to glow a bright blue. It was a blasting curse and they both knew it. It wasn't like the time they'd faced each other in the graveyard, Harry wasn't going to be satisfied with just disarming the snake-like man. There was silence for a moment before the two of them moved, seemingly as one,

"Avada Kedavra!"

"Bombarda Maxima!"

The two spells hit each other in mid-flight and linked the two brother wands together. This was the same thing that had happened in the graveyard but this time neither one of them wanted to run, they both were focused solely on destroying their opponent. As the two spells collided in the middle the colours blended at the meeting point, glowing with a kind of sea-blue light that Harry had never seen in any type of spell he'd ever performed or seen used before. Voldemort, being vastly more knowledgeable in spells than Harry, knew that sea-blue was the calm and deceptive colour of spells designed to not only destroy a soul, like the killing curse did, but to destroy the body too, like the blasting curse could.

Harry gritted his teeth and tried with all of his might to push his wand, and his magic, forwards and closer to Voldemort. Unfortunately, Voldemort had the same idea so the centre of the two attacks seemed to blur a little bit as it was moved closer to one of them, only to shoot closer to the other before once again being pulled back. By this point the protective dome was beginning to form above the two of them, effectively sealing them both in. But still, neither of them seemed to be getting any sizable advantage over the other, their spells were locked together and there was nothing for it but to wait for one of them to run out of magic from their magical core.

Although Harry was sure that he had to advantage in this, seeing as he could amplify his core two more times theoretically, the problem was that he only had a theoretical advantage. He had never even tried to use the second or third level of amplification. The book had been very clear that using them was often what killed many Potters. So he couldn't rely on it if he wanted to ensure that he could live. He gritted his teeth harder still, his teeth aching now; he had to come with a new way of beating Voldemort without using the other amplification otherwise he might just kill himself trying to break a stalemate.

A single idea came to him.

It was stupid.

It was simple.

It was the only thing he had so it was either this or use a technique which had roughly a 70% chance of frying his magical core and causing the magic to leak into his body, literally dissolving him from the inside out. Seeing no other option, Harry gritted his teeth and focused his intent as he had been taught. Sometimes the intent was what helped to make a spell as strong as it could be. It was what gave the spell its form, its shape and its effect. He cleared his mind even as the duelling spells grew closer to him. Gathering his magic to him, he opened his eyes, the magic in them shining brighter than ever,

"RAAAAAAAH!" he roared freely, not bothering to use words. They were pointless at the moment, what he was doing now was the same kind of feral and primal vocalisation that the earliest wizards would have used in their caves. The words weren't important, only the intent was important. And the intent was working. Harry's wand shot off a spell even though it was currently already firing one, a single iron spike that flew straight through both the blasting curse and the killing curse because it was solid and they were nothing but energy.

It was stupid.

It was simple.

It worked.

The single metal spike caught Voldemort in the chest, literally striking him through the heart. Voldemort's eyes widened as the spike lifted him off of the ground slightly with its power and strength. At the same time, the connection broke and the combined spells came racing towards the Dark Lord. Fortunately, somewhat fortunately at least, Harry dropped his blasting curse so the spell that came flying towards Voldemort was just the soul-destroying killing curse.

Lucky him.

Flying like a rag doll as the spell hit him; Voldemort's corpse flew through the air at great speeds before slamming into a wall. But instead of sliding down the wall, his body stayed where it was, the metal spike pinning the snake-like man's body to the wall firmly. Harry,

upon seeing this, let out a breath he'd been holding since the beginning of the fight and fell to his knees in relief.

He'd done it.

It was over.

He'd killed Lord Voldemort!

Harry laughed happily, with a touch of hysteria he would admit, as it sank in. He'd killed the killer of his parents, the killer of hundreds of people. Thousands perhaps. He slowly pulled himself to his feet, well aware that there were still some of the weaker Death Eaters running around the town. But, he noticed when he noticed the logs lying around, the plan to swap all civilians with logs had been a resounding success. A large number of footsteps down the street caught his attention and Harry gritted his teeth, held his wand tightly and spun to face whoever was coming.

He laughed a little bit and lowered his wand when he noticed that it was just Albus Dumbledore and his do-gooder brigade. The entire Order of the Phoenix, other than those who had been here already under Harry's orders, was flanking the Headmaster, along with several schoolchildren. He saw most of Gryffindor House, including Ginny Weasley, who had hardly been seen out of her dorm after he'd beaten Ron in the duel. The fact that they were late, even to Voldemort's death, just seemed so incredibly funny to him right now. He chuckled a little bit as Dumbledore took a step closer to him,

"Harry! What on earth have you done here?" he asked, the sparkle long gone from his eyes. Harry blinked a little bit, he'd never seen Albus Dumbledore without the sparkle in his eyes. The Headmaster looked every bit the fighter that had taken on both Grindelwald and Voldemort at the heights of their respective powers, "What possessed you to destroy most of Hogsmeade? You've killed hundreds of people Harry!"

It was more than a little bit insulting that Albus thought that he would kill so many people without a care but when he looked up he noticed the lingering mushroom cloud hanging over what remained of the east side of the village. It was nothing but smoking rubble now, the spell the twins had created had been incredibly powerful and destructive. He turned back to the Headmaster, serious now,

"If you had thought to look into this more before accusing me, Albus, you would see that the only people in this town are either Death Eaters or people fighting Death Eaters." He gestured towards one of the logs, "A friend of mine, Richard Romain, transfigured logs into human bodies and controlled them. No civilians have died here today Albus."

Before Albus could think about disputing what Harry had said he blinked a few times as a man who could almost have passed for his twin pulled himself out of a pile of rubble. Aberforth Dumbledore moved to stand beside Harry,

"He's right... brother." The word seemed to be said as an insult and Albus shrank in on himself, losing some of his impressive stature and presence, "This boy took the fight to the Dark Lord Voldemort when you and your band of 'fighters' waited and waited. You were never going to attack so this boy, no, this man, did. He fought against Tom Riddle better in one day than you have done with your entire life. And do you know what else Albus? He won."

With that, Aberforth gestured at the corpse of Lord Voldemort, stilling held against the wall by the spike through his heart. His eyes were dead and lifeless, his body completely limp and boneless. There was no doubt that the spirit had left the body. Albus did a great impression of a fish and Aberforth led his estranged brother aside to have a long over-due talk, much to Harry's relief. He wasn't strong enough to have any kind of confrontation with Albus Dumbledore right now, magically, physically or mentally. He was, in a word, drained.

From down one of the side alleyways, Daphne, Susan and Neville appeared. All three of them looked beaten to hell, cut up and burnt in several places. However, Neville seemed to be vaguely pleased with himself and Susan was smiling slightly, but in a dreamy kind of way that suggested she might have had a hit to the head. Daphne alone seemed happy enough to be grinning widely. Harry grinned back at her and took a step towards her when her expression changed to one of horror and she pulled out her wand.

What happened next appeared to happen in slow motion, for Harry at least.

Daphne, who seemed to be pointing her wand straight at him, sent off a powerful but compact blasting curse in his direction. Harry's eyes widened but the spell passed over his shoulder and hit something which had the good grace to shout out in pain to tell Harry that it had hit someone else. He was about to turn to see who it had hit when a spell rushed out from the crowd of Dumbledore supporters, another blasting curse.

Harry watched, helpless, as the blasting curse struck Daphne cleanly in the stomach, lifting her up into the air as it tore away at her soft skin.

As time sped up again, Harry was aware of someone screaming even as he ran over to Daphne, all previous fatigue forgotten as he made for her. It was when he was halfway to Daphne that he realised that he was the person screaming. But that didn't matter right now. As he sank to his knees, trying futilely to stop the bleeding from the massive damage done to her stomach with his hands, all that mattered was Daphne. He looked into her eyes. She was surprised and she was hurt. Her eyes locked with his own and he could see them beginning to lose focus,

"NO!" he cried out, pressing down on the wounds to try and keep the pressure on them. It wasn't working though, there were too many holes in her, every time he put pressure on one set of holes the other set would gush warm blood all over his hands. Oh good god it was all over his hands! He could feel it! All over his hands! Her lifeblood draining into his skin, staining him with her blood. Desperately, he tried to summon up his magic to try and use a healing spell through the same intent-based technique that he'd impaled Voldemort with. His hands glowed green for a brief moment before his core ran dry. His eyes lost their unnatural glow as the amplifier shut down, even the amplified reserves having run dry. He shook his head, his eyesight growing foggy with tears, "No no no no no! You can't die here!"

"Wasn't it you that said... only a child can't accept that death comes to us all?" a high pitched voice taunted him from behind. Harry paled as he turned round to face the living nightmare that was Lord Voldemort. He was stood by the ruins of the Hogs Head, some of his most loyal Death Eaters surrounding him, including Bellatrix. The Dark Lord was far from dead it seemed, there was a deep, bleeding, wound where the spike had been but other than that he was the

picture of snake-like health. Bellatrix was holding a bloody stump of an arm however and she was just limping back into the semi-circle of Voldemort's followers. Apparently she had been Daphne's target. He laughed cruelly, "When I kill you Potter, you will be reunited with your Mud-blood mother and your blood-traitor friend! You'll beg me to kill you when I have killed everyone you have ever cared about!"

With that Voldemort, and his remaining Death Eaters, disappeared. Harry couldn't believe it. All of this planning, all of the pain every member of the attack force had gone through, and it was all for nothing. Voldemort was still alive. A choking sound returned his attention to Daphne. The price was higher than just failure though. When he'd been looking at Voldemort Madam Pomfrey had come over to see if she could help Daphne. The elderly nurse shook her head sadly and Harry sobbed as he held Daphne's bloody form closer to him.

It got worse though.

Ginny Weasley, grinning like she had just done something incredible, bounced over to the group. Literally bounced, she had a spring in her step for god's sake. She beamed at Harry,

"Did you see that Harry?" she asked him, ecstatic, "I nailed that Slytherin bitch before she could betray you!"

At that moment in time Harry wanted nothing more than to kill Ginny Weasley. He was so blinded with rage that his amplification rune activated the second level without any conscious thought. His eyes glowed brighter than they ever had before as his core was not only refilled but filled to overflowing,

"Don't you dare speak to me." He growled out threateningly to Ginny, who, like everyone around them, was wise enough to back off, "I don't ever want to see you again. I'm taking her to the hospital."

With that he tried to disapparate, something Sirius had taught him over the holidays, but it didn't seem to want to work. He could feel his magic trying to tug him somewhere else but it wasn't working. Upon seeing his confusion, Aberforth knelt down in front of him, looking incredibly saddened,

"I'm sorry Harry..." he whispered quietly, "They put up anti-magical transportation wards when they left... you can't get there."

Harry glared up at Aberforth with his eyes brimming with magic. Even the Dumbledore brother was a little unnerved by the display of raw power combined with rage. Harry gritted his teeth and tightened his grip on Daphne,

"Not. An. Option!" he growled out even as he tried it again. A loud cracking sound vibrated through the air but they didn't move. He growled loudly in anger, "I will not lose her!"

Pushing all of his now substantial magic into the act of disapparation, Harry felt the tug of his magic and this time it was not blocked. In Hogsmeade there was an ear-splitting crack and the air around Harry and Daphne seemed to be filled with magic for a second before they disappeared...

To reappear in the middle of the waiting room for St Mungo's, smashing chairs and sending people flying as they appeared in occupied space. Medical staff immediately rushed out and ran to the two of them. Harry numbly shook them off of him and pointed to Daphne. He was going into shock and he knew it, he was shaking wildly and he wasn't able to keep the amplification rune going. Instantly his core was empty and the sudden shift had him on his hands and knees, panting for breath. It was in that position, half-deaf from shock, that Harry heard the healers talking,

"Fifty chance of survival for the girl... She's going to lose the baby."

THERE WE GO! XD

Another chapter down :P

FINALLY XD

Oh and please don't give me grief about not including the fight between Neville and the others against Bellatrix XD

If you wanted that you'd have been waiting awhile since I probably would have gotten halfway through and left it for a bit XD

Sorry for the long wait guys, I hope you can all stop reviewing that I've forgotten my own story now you know Harry being drunk was just a clever ruse :P

Once again, visit the site of me and my girlfriend damn it XD

[www . Hogwarts vs durmstrang . forum otion . co . uk](http://www.Hogwarts-vs-durmstrang-forumotion.co.uk)

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